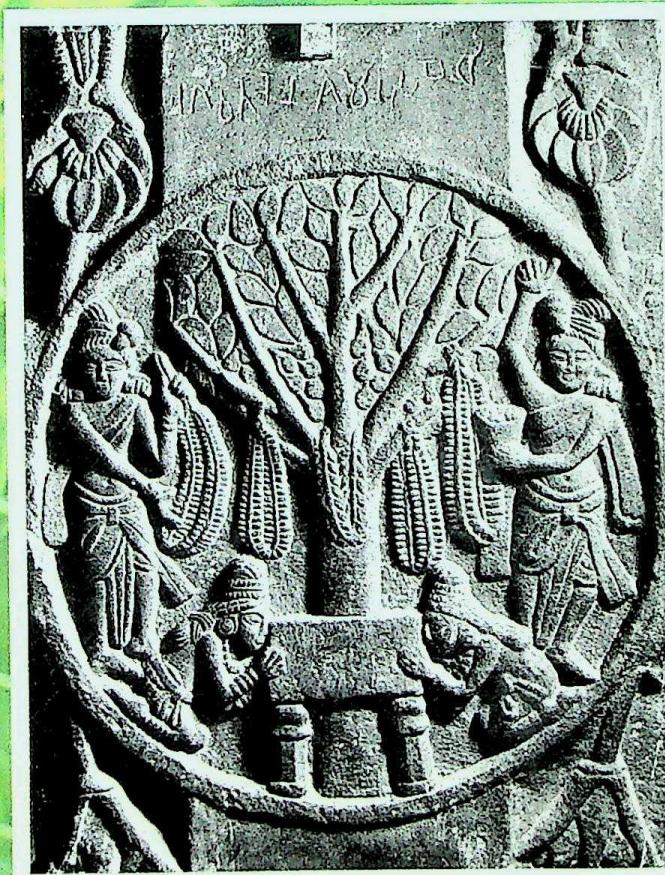


# PLANTS IN INDIAN TEMPLE ART



SHAKTI M. GUPTA

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**B.R. Publishing Corporation**

[A Division of D.K. Publishers Distributors (P) Ltd]

Delhi - 110 052

*Sales Office:*

**D.K. Publishers Distributors (P) Ltd.**

1, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj

New Delhi-110 002

Phone: 3261465, 3278368

Fax: 091-011-3264368

© 1996 Shakti M. Gupta (b. 1927- )

ISBN 81-7018-883-0

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*Laser Typeset & Published by:*

**B.R. Publishing Corporation**

[A Division of D.K. Publishers Distributors (P) Ltd.]

Regd. Office: A-6, Nimri Community Centre

Ashok Vihar Phase IV, Near Bharat Nagar

Delhi-110 052

Phone: 7430113, 7143353

Fax: 091-011-7138265



**PRINTED IN INDIA**

*By: D.K. Fine Art Press, (P) Ltd., Delhi 110 052.*

6448

Dedicated to the memory  
of  
Professor Dr. Heinz Mode



## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Delhi University for giving me three years study leave to study plants depicted on temples of India. I am also grateful to the Indian Council of Historical Research for funding the project.

I must also express my gratitude to the American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi, The French Institute of Indology, Pondicherry, The Botanical Survey of India, Andaman & Lakshadweep office, Archaeological Survey of India Offices, the staff of various archaeological museums in India and others for their courtesy and help.

I am particularly grateful to Nina Gwatkine for taking photographs on my behalf, to Shri R.N. Haldipur, former Lt. Governor of Pondicherry, Shri H.K.L. Kapoor, former Chief Secretary of Gujarat and Shri Krishna Deva, former Director, Archaeological Survey of India for their help. Shri Krishna Deva gave valuable suggestions and was good enough to write the Foreword.

My thanks are also due to Dr. Prahlad Malhotra, Asha Malhotra, Prof. Kailash Sahni, Shri Sundar Burra, Shri Swadesh Kumar, Shri S. Ramakrishna I.A.S., Shri Ravi Bedi, Photographer, Shri Kuldip Rai and Shri Jagdish Vaid, formerly of Bharat Petroleum, Dr. C. Babu (Botany Department, Delhi University), Dr. B.D. Vasishta (Botany Department, Kurukshetra University), Mrs. Kamla Ramachandra of INSDOC, Dr. Poonam Mohindra & Dr. Chitralekha, Gulshan Lal and Sher Bahadur Chauhan of the Botany Department, Dayal Singh College, New Delhi. My thanks are also due to the Library staff of IAS Academy, Mussoorie, National Museum Library, New Delhi, India International Centre Library for their help. My very special thanks to my husband, Madan, who bore patiently my absence from home for long stretches of time while I was away making an on-the-spot study of temple motifs.

**Shakti M. Gupta**

## Photo Credits

### **Archaeological Survey of India**

5, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 25, 26, 30, 32, 35, 39, 40, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 63, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 78, 79, 81, 82, 90, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 123, 124, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, 135, 137, 140, 141, 142, 145, 146, 147, 151, 152, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 160, 163, 164, 166, 170, 171, 172, 181, 183, 184, 187, 190, 192, 198, 199, 200, 203, 204, 206, 213, 214, 215, 217, 219, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235

### **American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi**

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### **French Institute of Indology, Pondicherry**

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### **Times of India**

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### **Commercial Photographer**

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### **Nina Gwatkin**

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## Lunar Months

Magh	:	January-February
Phalgun	:	February-March
Chaitra	:	March-April
Vaishakha	:	April-May
Jyeshtha	:	May-June
Ashadha	:	June-July
Shravana	:	July-August
Bhadra	:	August-September
Ashvina	:	September-October
Karttika	:	October-November
Agrahayana	:	November-December
Pausha	:	December-January

## Abbreviations

A.I.F.A.C.S.	:	All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society
A.P.	:	Andhra Pradesh
Beng.	:	Bengali
C.S.I.R.	:	Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
Eng.	:	English
Guj.	:	Gujarati
H.P.	:	Himachal Pradesh
I.C.A.R.	:	Indian Council of Agricultural Research
I.J.H.S.	:	Indian Journal of Historical Society
J. & K.	:	Jammu & Kashmir
Kan.	:	Kannada
M.A.S.I.	:	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India
M.P.	:	Madhya Pradesh
Mal.	:	Malayalam
Mar.	:	Marathi
Mbh.	:	Mahabharata
N.B.T.	:	National Book Trust
NMD	:	National Museum, Delhi
Pers.	:	Persian
Pl.	:	Plant
Pondi.	:	Pondicherry
Punj.	:	Punjab
Raj.	:	Rajasthan
Sans.	:	Sanskrit
T.N.	:	Tamil Nadu
Tam.	:	Tamil
Tel.	:	Telugu
Trans.	:	Translation
U.P.	:	Uttar Pradesh

## List of Plants Sculpted on Temples

<i>Latin Name</i>	<i>Popular name</i>	<i>Family</i>
<i>Aegle marmelos</i> Correa	Bilva, Bel	Rutaceae
<i>Albizia lebbek</i> Benth.	Sirisa, Sirisha	Mimosaceae
<i>Alocasia indica</i> (Roxb.) Schott	Manaka, Taro	Araceae
<i>Alstonia scholaris</i> , R.Br.	Saptaparna, Saptaparni	Apocynaceae
<i>Anacardium occidentale</i> Linn.	Cashew, Kaju	Anacardiaceae
<i>Ananas cosmosus</i> (Linn.) Merrill.	Ananas, Pine-apple	Bromeliaceae
<i>Annona squamosa</i> Linn.	Sharifa, Sitaphal	Annonaceae
<i>Anthocephalus cadamba</i> Miq.	Kadamba, Nipa	Rubiaceae
<i>Artabotrys hexapetalus</i> (Linn.F) Bhandari	Kateli champa, Kantali champa	Annonaceae
<i>Artocarpus incisa</i> Linn.f.	Bread fruit	Moraceae
<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> Lam.	Kathal, Jack fruit	Moraceae
<i>Averrhoa carambola</i> Linn.	Kamrak	Oxalidaceae
<i>Bambusa</i> sp. Schreb	Venu, Bamboo	Poaceae (Gramineae)
<i>Bauhinia variegata</i> Linn.	Kachnar	Caesalpinaeae
<i>Bombax ceiba</i> Linn.	Salmali, Silk cotton tree	Bombacaceae
<i>Borassus flabellifer</i> Linn.	Tala tree	Arecaceae (Palmae)
<i>Calotropis gigantea</i> R. Br. ex. Ait.	Arka, Arucu, Madar	Asclepiadaceae
<i>Capsicum annuum</i> Linn.	Mirch, Chillies	Solanaceae
<i>Caryota urens</i> Linn.	Horse-tail Palm	Arecaceae (Palmae)
<i>Cassia fistula</i> Linn.	Amaltas, Indian Laburnum, Suvarnavriksha	Caesalpinaeae
<i>Citrus Limon</i> (Linn.) and <i>Citrus Medica</i>	Bijora, Bijapura	Rutaceae
<i>Cocos nucifera</i> Linn.	Coconut, narial	Arecaceae (Palmae)
<i>Couroupita guianensis</i> Aubl.	Coniferous cone	Gymnosperms
<i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> Roxb.	Nagalingam, Cannon ball	Lecythidaceae
<i>Durio zibethinus</i> Linn.	Cycad like leaf	Gymnosperms
<i>Elaeocarpus sphaericus</i> (Gaertn.) K. Schum	Shisham	Fabaceae (Papilionaceae)
<i>Emblica officinalis</i> Gaertn.	Durian, Civet	Bombacaceae
<i>Erythrina variegata</i> Linn.	Rudraksha	Elaeocarpaceae
<i>Euphorbia</i> species	Amalaka, amala, dhatri	Euphorbiaceae
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Linn.	Mandar, Indian Coral tree	Fabaceae, (Papilionaceae)
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i> , variety <i>krishnae</i> C.D.C.	Danda Thor	Euphorbiaceae
<i>Ficus elastica</i> Roxb.	Fern leaves	Pteridophyta
<i>Ficus glomerata</i> Roxb.	Nyagrodha, Vata, Vad	Moraceae
<i>Ficus religiosa</i> Linn.	Krishna's buttercup	Moraceae
<i>Glochidion velutinum</i> Wight	India-Rubber plant	Moraceae
<i>Helianthus annuus</i> Linn.	Udumbara, Gular	Moraceae
<i>Jasminum sambac</i> (Linn.) Ait.	Ashvattha, Peepul, Bodhi tree	Moraceae
<i>Kigelia africana</i> (pinnata) DC	Paritza, Showra	Euphorbiaceae
<i>Livistona chinensis</i> R.Br.	Sunflower, Surajmukhi	Asteraceae, (Compositae)
	Mallika, Jasmine	Oleaceae
	Sausage tree	Bignoniaceae
	Chinese Fan Palm	Arecaceae (Palme)

(Contd..)

Latin Name	Popular name	Family
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> Linn.	Him Champa	Magnoliaceae
<i>Magnolia soulangena</i> Linn.	Champa	—
<i>Mangifera indica</i> Linn.	Mango, Aam, Amra	Anacardiaceae
<i>Mesua ferrea</i> Linn.	Naga Kesar	Clusiaceae (Guttiferae)
<i>Mimusops elengi</i> Linn.	Vakula, Bakula	Sapotaceae
<i>Monstera deliciosa</i> Liebm.	Monstera	Aracaceae (Palme)
<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> Linn.	Banana, Plantain	Musaceae
<i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.	Padma, Lotus	Nymphaeaceae
<i>Nymphaea stellata</i> Willd.	Nilotpala, Neelkamal, Blue water lily	Nymphaeaceae
<i>Ocimum sanctum</i> Linn.	Tulasi, Holy Basil	Lamiaceae, (Labiateae)
<i>Pandanus odoratissimus</i> Linn.f	Ketaki, Pandanus	Pandanaceae
<i>Parkia biglandulosa</i> Wight & Arn., Parkia Roxburghii G. Don	Parkia	Mimosaceae
<i>Papaver somniferum</i> Linn.	—	—
<i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> Linn.	Poppy, Post, Afim	Papaveraceae
<i>Piper betle</i> Linn.	Khajur, Date palm	Arecaceae
<i>Plumeria acuminata</i> Ait.	Betel leaf, Paan,	Piperaceae
<i>Polyalthia longifolia</i> Thw.	Tambula, Nagavalli	Apocynaceae
<i>Punica granatum</i> Linn.	Champa, Temple tree	Annonaceae
<i>Pyrus communis</i> Linn.	Ashoka	Punicaceae
<i>Raphanus sativus</i> Linn.	Pomegranate, Anar	Rosaceae
<i>Ravenala madagascariensis</i> Sonn.	Pear, Nashpati	Brassicaceae, (Cruciferae)
<i>Rhodospatha pitcairniaefolia</i> Ben. & Hook.	Radish, Mulaka, Muli	Musaceae
<i>Saccharum officinarum</i> Linn.	Travellers Palm	Bromelliaceae
<i>Saraca asoca</i> (Roxb.) De Wilde	Sugarcane, Ikshu, Khanda	Poaceae (Gramineae)
<i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn.f.	Ashoka, Sita Ashoka	Caesalpiniaceae
<i>Solanum melongena</i> Linn.	Shala, Sala	Dipterocarpaceae
<i>Spathodea campanulata</i> Beauv.	Brinjal, baigun	Solanaceae
<i>Syzygium cumini</i> (L) Skeets.	African Tulip tree, Patadi	Bignoniaceae
<i>Terminalia arjuna</i> (Roxb.) Wight & Arn.	Jaman, Naval, Java plum	Myrtaceae
<i>Vitis vinifera</i> Linn.	Arjuna tree	Combretaceae
<i>Zea Mays</i> Linn.	Grape vine, Angur	Vitaceae
<i>Zizyphus mauritiana</i> Lam.	Corn, Makai	Poaceae (Gramineae)
	Badari, Badara, Ber, Jujube	Rhamnaceae

## Other Plants Mentioned in the Text

Kapiththa	<i>Feronia elephantum</i> Correa
Tillai	<i>Exocaria agallocha</i> Linn.
Vanni	<i>Prosopis cinenaria</i> Druce
Patali	<i>Stereospermum suaveolens</i> DC
Datura, Dhatura	<i>Datura metel</i> Linn.
Darbha, Durva	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> Pers.
Munja ghas	<i>Erianthus munja</i> Jesw.

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## Foreword

Besides being an eminent Ethnobotanist, Dr. Shakti M. Gupta is an Indologist of international repute and author of several well-illustrated books dealing with the iconography of various Hindu gods like Shiva, Vishnu, Surya and Karttikeya, their symbolical significance, mythology and legends connected with them and their representation in visual arts, ritual and folk tradition. As a complement to this series, she has also authored an interesting book, *From Daityas to Devatas in Hindu Mythology*, the demons and gods in religion and art; demons the gods fought and vanquished. Her other well-known books are: *Plant Myths and Traditions in India* and *Festivals, Fairs and Fasts of India*, a sumptuously illustrated and most comprehensive work on the subject. Dr. Gupta has thus already established her reputation as a *raconteur* and interpreter of the religious art and tradition of India.

Eventhough the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples of India are replete with depictions of animals, semi-divine beings, gods and goddesses, as well as plants, it is the first time that a comprehensive work has been done on the plants sculpted on Indian temples.

The present book of Dr. Shakti Gupta is a result of laborious field work involving study of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples of India and of sculptures stored in the principal public museums in the country. Dr. Gupta has minutely observed the plants and foliage richly depicted in Indian Art, and used her scientific talents as a botanist to identify them and trace their history and antiquity. Her book also explores the literary references to various Indian plants, flowers and fruits and highlights the related myths and rich traditions, some of them still living. Such a scientific and comprehensive work on Indian plants sculpted on temples and their symbology in art and tradition fulfils a great desideratum and will be read with avid interest by students of arts and of physical as well as Social Sciences both in India and abroad.

Saket  
New Delhi

**KRISHNA DEVA**  
Former Director  
Archaeological Survey of India and  
Consultant,  
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Varanasi

## Introduction

Indian temple art is conservative and new ideas are not easily assimilated. Temple rituals have remained the same from very early times, beliefs have remained the same, with the attendant folklore and legend, and naturally, therefore the scenes and motifs are based on those legends. The same goes for floral offerings and the depiction of floral motifs on temples. But this does not mean that temple architecture has become static and new ideas are not assimilated.

It was imperative that the changing scenario all around would have an impact on temple architecture and ornamentation also. The artisans who were earlier patronized by the nobility and belonged to a guild, did assimilate new ideas and evolved new forms and styles but basically they retained the norms of traditional art as mentioned in the *Shilpa Shastras*, the ancient treatise on architecture. And thus a continuous creative tradition was evolved with minor additions and subtractions. This is particularly noticeable in the case of plants depicted on temples which according to popular botanical belief are not indigenous to India. Since the temple priests are orthodox and conservative in their views, they would never accept a flower, fruit or even a leaf as offering unless it had been traditionally accepted.

One such flower is *Naga Lingam*, the beautiful flower which looks as if the multi-headed *naga* or serpent was worshipping the *Siva-linga*. It is a difficult flower to sculpt except stylistically (pl.67). For the *Naga lingam* flower to be accepted as an offering, it must have been growing in India from a much earlier date than is popularly believed. The tree is indigenous to Mexico.

The Hindu temple symbolically represents the universe in which everything has a place, whether it is the world of deities, dancers, musicians, beautiful maidens, spirits or celestial beings. Even the proportions of the temple, the number of pillars and corridors it should have are all fixed according to a universal law as mentioned in ancient texts. The ancient texts give definite rules for the construction of each portion of the temple as well as the proportions and angles of the figures sculpted on them. The temple is considered as the house and the body of the Universal Spirit, the God.

The temple walls carved with human, animal and mythological characters as well as the floral motifs, all form a pattern which has a specific place in the scheme of temple architecture. These decorative motifs are not sculpted haphazardly but in a definite pattern and nothing is out of place in this scheme. Soundara Rajan writes, "The Indian temple is the most prominent and enduring of the symbols of Indian culture: It was the product of the genius of Indian craftsmen, their patrons, pontiffs and the devotees, in so far as the *Silpa* texts and the structural architecture go and have the relationship of *sarira* (body) and *Atman* (soul)."<sup>1</sup>

Since religious art in India is based to a great extent on the mythology and the beliefs of its people, it becomes essential to study ancient religious literature of India for an understanding of the decorative motifs, whether animal or plant. In ancient India, trees were considered and worshipped as the abode of deities, tree spirits and of *yakshas*. The cult of tree worship is very old and till today, temples in villages, and wayside shrines are built under trees or as sometimes, a crude stone covered with vermillion is placed under a tree and worshipped. Trees are important because they provide shade and are a natural resting place for people. Cattle are tied under trees and even the local *Panchayat* of village elders may meet in the shade of a tree. It is expected, therefore, that plant motifs would be considered important for ornamentation of the temple and naturally, therefore, the legends associated with plants and worship of plants would also be depicted. But a large number of trees are also worshipped without necessarily a religious belief attached to them.

The earlier temples were merely trees or a seat of a deity under a tree (pl.101,102). In the words of Coomaraswamy: "It was just such an altar beneath a sacred tree that served as the *Bodhisattva*'s seat on the night of the Great Enlightenment, Sujata's maid servant, indeed, mistakes the *Bodhisattva* for the tree-spirit itself (*Nidanakatha*). It is very evident that the sacred tree and altar represents a combination taken over by Buddhism from older cults and in the case of *Bodhi* tree we see the transference actually in process."<sup>2</sup>

The belief in the presence of *Vanadevatas* or the tree spirits is very old. A reference to the *Vanadevatas* is made in Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala* where the *Vanadevatas* bless Shakuntala as she leaves for her husband's home.<sup>3</sup> This belief in the presence of tree spirits is not only prevalent among the Hindus but is also a very strong Buddhist and Jain belief. The Buddhist *Jatakas* are full of stories relating to the presence of tree spirits.<sup>4</sup> A sculpture from Bodh Gaya shows two human arms extended from the tree, one holding a plate full of food and the other containing a vessel with a drink, towards a man who is ready to receive them (pl.227).<sup>5</sup> Plate 204 shows the *Parinirvana*, the death of Buddha with a tree spirit guarding the body of the Buddha. According to the legend, the tree should be the *Sala* tree.

Folk deities and *yakshas* are believed to inhabit trees and that is why trees in the ancient Indian tradition were forbidden to be cut. When it became imperative to cut down a tree, as for instance for making images for worship or for building a house, an alternative residence was first offered to the tree spirit before the tree was felled. Very elaborate rituals were laid down which in itself would have deterred people from felling a tree. The sculptor had to perform certain rites such as marking off on its trunk the various sections of the image to be made. Next he had to propitiate the tree with various offerings and to worship at night the gods, manes, *rakshasas*, *nagas*, *asuras*, *ganas* and *Vinayaka*. In the morning, after sprinkling water on the tree and smearing the blade of his axe with honey and clarified butter, he would cut round the tree rightwards, beginning from the north-east corner.<sup>6</sup> In Tamil Nadu, shrines were erected in places where certain trees were regarded as the abode of the deity and worshipped as such. These were regarded as *Sthalavrikshas*. Mango tree, for example, is the *Sthalavriksha* of Ekambareswar temple, Kanchipuram; the *Jambu* tree of Jambukeswar temple, Tiruchirapalli, and the *Tillai* tree of Nataraja temple, Chidambaram.

To prevent ruthless felling of trees, superstitions were encouraged such as, one who wantonly cuts down a tree would go to *Asipatravana* hell where the leaves of trees are like swords.<sup>7</sup>

Coomaraswamy writes: "... It is quite certain that the word *caitya* sometimes means no more than a sacred tree, or a tree with an altar under it; such are designated *caityavrksas* in the Epics ... and should not be injured inasmuch as they are resorts of *Devas*, *Yaksas*, *Rakshasas* etc. Even when it so often happens in Buddhist literature, the Buddha is represented as halting or resting at the *Bhavanam* of some *yakka*, it does not follow that a building is meant; the *Bhavanam* may have been only a tree sacred to a *yaksa*, and such sacred trees are natural resting and meeting places in any village, as at the present date."<sup>8</sup>

Trees worshipped as the abode of Tree spirits are usually sculpted with a stone platform under it and floral offerings sculpted on the platform. Floral garlands offered by worshippers are also shown hanging from such trees. Men, women, children, celestial beings and animals are seen worshipping these trees. Such temples which are open to the sky with no roof over the object of worship are called Hyperthereal. These Hyperthereal temples are mostly seen in sculptures from Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, basically all Buddhist shrines. The trees sculpted are *Nyagrodha*, *Ashvattha*, *Badari*, *Kadamba*, *Kathal*, *Sirisha*, *Vanni*, *Bilva*, *Udumbara*, *Ashoka*, *Sala*, *Naga-Kesar*, *Amra*, etc.

There are many legends pertaining to gods and goddesses and a large number of these are associated with specific plants. If the temple is dedicated to a particular deity, only the legends connected with that deity are likely to be carved on it which automatically means the depiction of certain plants on these temples. One exception to the rule is the depiction, stylised or realistic of the *Kadamba* tree (pl.14) in the Krishna *vastraharana* scene, i.e., Krishna stealing the clothes of the *gopis* while they were bathing in the river, or, the depiction of the *Kadamba* tree in the *Kaliyadamana* episode.<sup>9</sup> The *vastraharana* episode is carved irrespective of

the denomination of the temple, *shaiva* or *vaishnava*. It is sculpted, at the Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli and Brihadishwara temple, Thanjavur, both of which are *shaiva* temples whereas the legend is *vaishnava* (pl.15).

Temples dedicated to Shiva have plant motifs of the *Arka*, *Bilva*, *Nyagrodha* trees whereas the *vaishnava* temples invariably have scenes from the *Ramayana* which include the *saptatala* legend; or young Krishna jumping from the *Kadamba* tree into the river Yamuna to kill Kaliya *naga* or Krishna taking away the clothes of the *gopis* onto the *Kadamba* tree while they were bathing in the river, or Krishna as a child uprooting the *Arjuna* trees, the killing of the ass demon, Dhenuka, in the forest of *Tala* trees etc.

With the exception of floral motifs sculpted at Bharhut, Sanchi and Kushan period sculptures found in and near Mathura, the best depictions are in relation to religious beliefs and legends. Motifs such as Jackfruit, Custard apple, mango, magnolia flowers, palms and many other plants seen on Bharhut and Sanchi stupas do not necessarily have any religious significance. They must have been commonly found in the vicinity of the temples and stupas though at present they are rare and only found in the evergreen forests or cultivated in orchards and grown in private gardens. The most frequent depiction is of the lotus flower which can be seen on the railing pillars of Bharhut and Bodh Gaya, and on the gateways of Sanchi. Lotus and other water lilies are frequently found growing in ponds near villages all over India. The largest congregation of plants sculpted at anyone place is at Sanchi and Bharhut, both in Madhya Pradesh. On Sanchi stupas the plant motifs are varied, unlike floral motifs on any other temple. A whole panorama of trees, water plants, cows, elephants and men are sculpted on a small panel giving the scene a patrol effect and a suggestion as if life abounds in every nook and corner of the universe.

Apart from floral motifs on Buddhist monuments, the temples of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Ajanta and Ellora caves of Maharashtra also have many types of vegetation sculpted on them as compared to temples in the rest of India. In most temples, plants associated with deities, *rishis* or mythological characters mentioned in the ancient texts are depicted. An important observation that has come out of this study is that the *shaiva* temples including temples dedicated to Devi, Ganesha, Surya or Kartikeya have more plant motifs as compared to the temples dedicated to Vishnu. In *Shaiva* temples plants commonly sculpted are the *Nyagrodha* with Shiva sitting under it in his *Dakshinamurti* aspect (pls.84,85); *Bilva* tree with invariably a *Sivalinga* present under it (pls.1,2,3); sugarcane as a bow in the hands of Kamadeva, Rati or Devi (pls.183,184,185,186); and the *Arka* plant associated with Shiva (pl.51).

Vishnu temples have the lotus flower depicted in various forms, such as Brahma sitting on a lotus which is called the *nabhi-kamala* arising from the navel of Vishnu (pl.151); Sri Lakshmi sitting or standing on a lotus (pl.155); Surya images with full blown lotus flowers in their hands (pl.154); lotus flower substituting the head of a deity (pl.150); or the lotus as purely decorative (pls.146,163); and the *Kadamba* tree associated with legends of Krishna's exploits and miracles.

The association of the tree with a deity goes back into antiquity as is seen from the ancient *indramaha* festival where a tree was stripped of its leaves and branches and the *stambha*, i.e., the tree trunk called the *Indradhvaja* or the banner of Indra was worshipped and adored as God Indra himself. It was not only identified with him by name but also had the identification marks of the god's body, such as his feet, the abdomen and the upper part of his body marked on the tree trunk. Bosch writes about the stem as a deity, "When the tree is transformed into a human being, or inversely, the *stambha* ceases to be an intermediary. Both are directly compared or identified with each other, change into each other or manifest their identify in some other way. . . *Ashvattha* is the manifestation of Vishnu, *Palasa* (*Butea monosperma*) of Brahma, *Nyagrodha* of Shiva, *Udumbara* (*Ficus glomerata*) of Yama Mbh, xiii, 1,49,101: Vishnu who is the evergrowing and tall Banyan that overtops all other trees. He who is the sacred Fig tree."<sup>10</sup>

The miraculous birth of *Bodhisattva* Siddhartha in the Lumbini gardens near Kapilavastu is well known. The tree, the branches of which bent by Mahamaya, mother of Siddhartha Gautama is variously described as *Sala* tree (*Nidanakatha*); mango (*Ashokavadana*); Plaksha (*Lalita Vistara*), Ashoka (*Divyavadana*). But mostly the Ashoka

or the *Salmali*, the red silk cotton tree is depicted in the nativity scheme of Buddha. The *Salmali* is not mentioned as having been associated with the birth of Siddhartha Gautama. This tree is depicted in the nativity of Siddhartha as a tree motif only in the Gandhara sculptures and could be explained by the fact that none of the trees associated with the birth of Buddha grew in the region of Gandhara and the artisans sculpting the nativity scene of Siddhartha must have used their imagination and depicted a five petalled large-sized flower which resembles the *Salmali* flower. In the *Jatakas* the tree spirits play an important role and were regularly worshipped. Even though all trees are believed to possess a Tree Spirit, the Banyan, *Sala* and the *Salmali* trees were their favourite, and that could also be the reason why the *Salmali* tree is sculpted in Buddha's nativity scene as depicted in Gandhara sculptures.

To celebrate the event of Buddha's birth and to worship the tree under which he was born, was natural. In course of time, the anniversary of his birth evolved into a special festival. To commemorate the auspicious occasion, young maidens would gather in a grove of *Sala* trees. They would sing, dance and gather the flowers of *Sala* trees and playfully throw them at each other and thus got the epithet *Salabhanjika*, the one who breaks the flowers of the *Sala* tree. This festival of women gathering the flowers of the *Sala* tree was common in the eastern parts of India, where *Sala* trees grew in abundance and was specially celebrated in cities like Sravasti, Vaisali and others associated with the life of Gautama Buddha. The *Sala* tree in full blossom was also worshipped for obtaining offspring.

Mahamaya, the mother of Siddhartha Gautama standing cross-legged and bending the branch of a wide-spreading tree, in her longing for offspring, is commonly depicted on Buddhist shrines but apart from the Gandhara sculptures, the tree under which Siddhartha was born is usually sculpted as the *Ashoka* tree even though the common belief is that he was born under the *Sala* tree.

In the post-nativity period, gradually the festival lapsed into obscurity. In art, instead of the nativity scene, the woman or *yakshi* was represented by a charming lady standing cross-legged under a tree, bending its branch with one hand and the other placed on her hip, very much the same pose of Mahamaya's during the nativity of Buddha.

During the post-Kushan period, the woman and tree motif became very popular in art and the best examples are to be seen from Mathura and its surroundings. By the time of the Maurya-Sunga period, *Salabhanjika* motif had been fully evolved and was carved on the brackets of the Buddhist toranas, railing pillars and *stupas* of Sanchi and Bharhut, Mathura, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. *Salabhanjika* became *Vrikshaka* and had the three-fold curve of her body. She is shown as a full-breasted voluptuous woman, nude or semi-nude, heavily ornamented and wearing a jewelled waist-girdle (*Mekhala*). Since the tree depicted is not only the *Sala* tree but also other trees like the mango, the *Ashoka*, *Kadamba*, *Ketaki*, *Arka*, etc., it is better to call them *vrikshakas* and not *salabhanjikas*. In this pose mostly the women are shown standing cross-legged on a mount such as a *Yaksha* (*Guha*), Swan (*Hamsa*), Crocodile (*Makara*), Elephant (*Gaja*), a full blown lotus and sometimes a wine-pot (*Sura-patra*). In the sculptures of woman and tree motif, the beauty of women complements the beauty of vegetation. These women possessed of voluptuousness and exciting beauty and referred as *Kama-mohini* were the *Yakshis* or *Vanadevis* often worshipped in ancient India for begetting children.<sup>11</sup> Coomaraswamy writes that there is a mention in the *Mahabharata* of the dryads, *Vrikshaka* and *Vrikshi* who were worshipped by those desiring children.

A common belief called *Dohada* is that the *Asoka* tree will only flower if kicked by the left foot of a beautiful damsel particularly if she is under the influence of wine. *Dohada* is a pregnancy longing associated with a longing for creation. This feeling is transferred to the *Asoka* tree which flowers when its longing for creation i.e., flowering and bearing fruit is satisfied. Such beliefs preserve the close relationships between trees, tree spirits and man.

Zimmer writes: "Girls and young women were regarded as human embodiment of the maternal energy of nature. They are diminutive doubles of the great Mother of all life, vessels of fertility, life in full sap, potential

sources of new offsprings. By touching and kicking the tree, they transfer into it their potency, and enable it to bring forth blossoms and fruit. Hence, the goddess who represents the life energy and fertility of the tree is herself most aptly visualized in this magic posture of fertilization.”<sup>12</sup>

Belief in the *yakshis*, i.e., Tree Spirits and the fertility cult associated with it is age old. With Tree Spirits worshipped for the gift of children and women associated with the worship of trees, it was to be expected that women would be represented in art as Tree Spirits. The belief that women have miraculous powers of fertility which they could pass to the trees expanded the idea of woman and tree motif which one comes across basically only at Buddhist shrines dated from c.2nd century B.C. to c.2nd century A.D. The trees commonly found sculpted in the woman and tree motif category are: *Ashoka* (pls. 18,131,133,168,193), *Pandanus*, *Kadamba*, *Mango*, *Champa* and *Naga-Kesar*. There are some strange beliefs such as, *Bakula* tree only flowers when a damsels sprinkles intoxicants from her mouth on it.<sup>13</sup> In the Buddhist sculpture even *Bodhisattva* Lokeshwar, like the *Vrikshakas*, stands in a *tri-bhanga* style, the three fold curve of his body, holding a flowering stalk of an 8-petalled flower in his left hand.

Trees had a very important place in Buddhism, and were associated with different sages. *Ashvattha* is the tree of Enlightenment of Gautama Buddha. *Ashoka* of Vipaswi, *Pundarika* of Sikkhī, *Sala* of Vishvabhu, *Sirisha* of Krakuchchanda and *Nyagrodha* of Kanakmuni.<sup>14</sup>

Ancient Indian literature has several references to tree worship and a special festival called *Vriksha-Maha* or *Rukkha-Maha* was held where the worship of trees was the main attraction.<sup>15</sup> This is evident from the vast number of trees sculpted as being worshipped dating from the 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. Earlier in the history of man, the Supreme Being was worshipped in the form of trees perhaps because of the multiple utility of trees, also as the abode of Tree Spirits, or as the residence of a *Yaksha*. Such trees are known as *rukka-chaityas*. The list of trees worshipped is so large that one is forced to the conclusion that trees as such were worshipped apart from their being associated with a deity or a legend.

A large tree with its numerous branches and foliage giving shade was worshipped as a *chaitya vriksha*. Such a tree of massive dimensions, in the *Vedas* was considered as symbol of the Cosmic Tree or Brahman. Later, a tree considered as a *Chaitya vriksha* was enclosed by a railing to give it a sacred character and this railing was called a *Vedika*. During ancient times when the traditions of building temples to a deity had not started, a platform shrine under a tree was constructed. Such stone sculptures of trees with a platform under it with or without a railing, the tree spreading in all directions and the centre open to the sky have been found at Buddhist sites of Sanchi, Bharhut, Mathura, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.

The cult of tree worship was wide-spread and *Bali* offerings were made to the tree-spirit, the *Rukka-devata*, to appease him and also for grant of wishes.<sup>16</sup> The utility of trees in a country with a hot climate was recognised from very early times. The merit of planting trees is given in many old texts. In *Matsya Purana*, a legend says that Parvati planted a sapling of the *Asoka* tree and the deities asked her the merit that she would get by planting trees. Parvati replied that by constructing a *vapi*, i.e., a stepped well, one gains the fruits of digging ten wells, a pond to ten *vapis*, a son to ten ponds and a tree was equal in merit to ten sons.<sup>17</sup> So much importance was given to trees that in *Agni Purana*, the performance of the rites of consecration of trees in general and orchards in particular, as mentioned.<sup>18</sup>

The most frequent form of decoration on temple walls and pillars is the 4-petalled floral motif, followed by the 5-petal, 6-petal and 8-petal motifs without the accompanying leaves, stems and fruits. Whereas some of the flowers in this category can be identified, it is not always possible to find the model for the flower. This according to the author is because of the symbolism attached to the number of the flower petals which is more important than the realistic depiction of the flower. The depiction has nothing to do with the plants growing in the vicinity of the temples as can be seen from the accompanying chart of 4-petalled flowers found sculpted on temples of Tamil Nadu and, the accompanying chart of different types of 4-petalled flowers growing in the State.

According to the author, the four petals symbolise the four directions of space, north, south, east and west. The centre, the stalk or the thalamus represents the Supreme God sitting on the Golden Mt. Meru, the mythical mountain present in the centre of the universe and controlling equally all the four directions of space. It is from the centre that the main channels arise in the four directions. It is through these channels that forces of life, fertility and prosperity ramify throughout the universe (pls.228,234,235, 236).

The four petals symbolically are the four *Vedas*: *Rig-Veda*, *Sama-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*; the four stages of life: infancy, childhood, adult age and old age; the four *ashramas* into which a Hindu divides the life span: *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha*, *Sanyasa*, and the four divisions of the Hindu society: *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*; the four aims of life: pleasure, success, righteousness and liberation.

The 5-petalled floral motifs symbolically are the five *Jnana-indriyas*, viz., sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing as well as the five basic elements like fire, ether, earth, water and wind (pl.229).

The 6-petalled floral motif symbolises the six directions of space: north, south, east and west, above and below. The number six also symbolises the six *chakras*, i.e., five *Jnana-indriyas* or the five senses plus the mind which collectively represent the six attributes of the Supreme Lord. These are: *Jnana* (wisdom), *Bala* (strength), *Kirti* (fame), *Vairagya* (dispassion), *Shree* (wealth), and *Aishwarya* (divine powers). The symbol six also represents the six schools of Hindu philosophy: *Nyaya* and *Vaisheshika*, *Sankhya* and *Yoga*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta* (pls.230,231).

The 7-petalled flower motifs are sculpted, but rarely. The number seven (*sapta*) is considered highly auspicious and believed to have magical potency. There are *sapta-rishis*, *saptamatrikas*, *saptatala*, *saptasagara* etc. (pl.232).

Eight-petalled floral motifs are quite common in most temples surveyed. The number represents the eight directions i.e., north, south, east, west, north-east, south-east, south-west and north-west. *Bodhisattva* Lokeshwar is usually seen standing on a lotus pedestal under a stylised tree and holding in his left hand the stalk of an 8-petalled flower, implying thereby his suzerainty over the right directions of the universe (pls.233,234).

Apart from the above mentioned floral decorations on temples, ornamental floral depictions consist mostly of leaves, flowers or even just petals. These are sculpted in rows, either as pillar decoration or on the plinth. Leaves commonly used as models for decorative purposes are the *Ashvattha*, betel leaves and occasionally *Nyagrodha* leaves. The flower motifs used for this purpose are the full-blown as well as half-flowers of the lotus or a water lily. Sometimes the 4-petalled flower motif is used to make a lattice design for a window or for a ceiling (pls.235,236).

In some temples, like the temples of Mt. Abu in Rajasthan and the Rukmini and Dwaraka temples of Gujarat, the moulding of lotus petals all round the base of the temple gives the impression that the temple is arising out of the lotus flower itself (pl.152).

In a survey of temples ancient, medieval and comparatively recent, in various States of India, it was found that there are two main forms of floral depictions on temples. One is purely decorative and the other has religious connotations. The decorative floral depiction can take many forms. Some are stylised though unmistakably of vegetable origin. In stylised forms it is not possible to identify the plant unless the floral motif is connected with a legend (pl.237).

The second category of plant depiction is of a religious nature where plants form an essential part of the theme such as the captivity of Sita (wife of Ramachandra of the epic *Ramayana*), by Ravana of Lanka and her imprisonment in the *Ashokavana*, the forest of *Ashoka* trees. It is said that Sita took refuge in the grove of *Ashoka* trees as the tree is believed to preserve chastity and so long as she stayed in the *Ashokavana*, Ravana could not molest her (pl.193).

Unlike animals who have a fixed number of limbs, leaves of plants are limitless and very often are depicted in a linear fashion than is the reality, due obviously to the monoplane sculptures, or they are shown crowded together giving a rounded appearance. A rounded top is common among trees growing in isolation in fields or wasteland places, and from a distance they look very much alike. If such a tree is depicted, it can only be listed as unidentified. In real life it is due to the effect of strong wind which makes the leaves and branches grow inwards, thus giving a round appearance to the tree top.

Sometimes the plants are shown in such a lifelike manner that even the veins of a leaf are not omitted or the flower can be very graphic in its representation but not the rest of the plant, or the whole plant is stylised, or very lifelike. From the door jamb depiction of the *Salabhanjikas* (pls.238,239), holding a branch of a stylised tree which adorns practically every temple in Tamil Nadu to the *vrikshakas* of the Kushan period where the tree motifs are lifelike, there is a vast range of floral motifs.



## Description of the Plants Depicted on the Temples

### AEGLE MARMELOS Correa

*Bilva* is a highly medicinal tree with a trifoliate arrangement of leaves. It is cultivated near *shaiva* temples as the tree is sacred to Shiva. Its fruit is round, yellow when ripe with a sweet pulp. The greenish-white or yellow flowers open in March-May and the tree fruits from April-August.

The fruits and leaves of the *Bilva* are considered as the best offerings to Shiva. This belief is corroborated in the *Siva Purana* where the merit of offering *Bilva* leaves to Shiva is mentioned. The devotee gains immense merit by watering the *Bilva* tree, offering *Bilva* leaves on a *Siva-linga* or even accidentally throwing *Bilva* leaves on a



Aegle marmelos

*Siva-linga* placed under a *Bilva* tree. *Linga* worship under the *Bilva* tree is highly meritorious for the worshipper. 'He who worships Mahadeva in the form of a *lingam* at the root of a *Bilva*, becomes a purified soul.'<sup>19</sup>

According to a legend in the *Siva Purana*, a hunter had climbed a *Bilva* tree waiting for his kill. There was a *lingam* under the tree. It was *Shivaratri*, the night when Shiva manifested himself in the *linga* form. The hunter was keeping vigil for the kill and in boredom plucked leaves of the *Bilva* which fell on the *lingam* installed below and even though he offered the *Bilva* leaves by accident, he got salvation (pl.1).<sup>20</sup> The motif is not very clear as the stone has corroded with age but in spite of it the *Siva-linga* under the tree, the hunter on the tree and the animal below are all identifiable.

Though the belief in the sacredness of the *Bilva* tree is prevalent all over India, there is no extant depiction of the tree on temples of north India. Apart from two stray steles with the *Bilva* tree motif reported from Gujarat, on Roda temple, Himmatnagar, and Sudama temple, Porbandar, the tree is mainly depicted on temples of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Some of the well known temples where the *Bilva* tree motif is sculpted are: Meenakshi-Sundareshvara temple, Madura, Nanjundesvara temple, Sivanmalai, Pachavaresvaran temple, Uraiur, Alagiyabiran temple, Tirukkungudi, Jambukeshvara temple, Tiruchirapalli, all in Tamil Nadu and Shri Kalahasti temple, Andhra Pradesh. J.N. Banerjea writes about Shri Lakshmi: 'If the image is four-armed, the attributes in her hands are a lotus, a *Shripal* (*bilva*), conch-shell, a pot of nectar, a citron (*matulunga*), a shield, a club etc.'<sup>21</sup>

The reason for Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu to hold the fruit of the *Bilva* tree in her hands is evident from the following story from *Brihaddharma Purana* as quoted by Gupta in his article on 'Tree Symbol Worship in Bengal'.<sup>22</sup> Lakshmi used to daily offer one thousand lotus buds to Shiva. One day she found that the lotus flowers were short by two. Since her husband, Vishnu, always compared her breasts to lotus buds, she decided to cut off her breasts and substitute them in place of the lotus flowers that were missing. As she cut off one breast, Shiva satisfied with her worship and sacrifice, appeared before her and blessed her that her cut breast (which had not been placed on the ground and, therefore, was clean) would grow to be the *Bilva* tree. According to *Banhipurana*



Plate No. 1

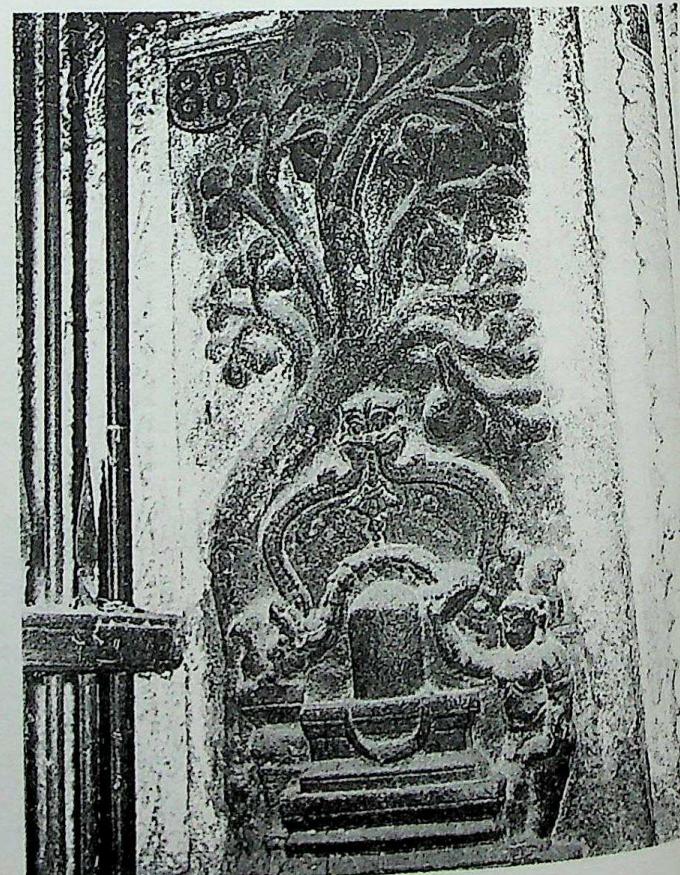


Plate No. 2

and *Tantrik* folklore Lakshmi was born as a sacred cow and from her dung arose the *Bilva* tree and is considered sacred. The tree being associated with Lakshmi, it is also called *Shribhiksha* (*Shrivriksha*), the tree of prosperity and good fortune, the attributes of Lakshmi.<sup>23</sup>

The trifoliate arrangement of leaves of the *Bilva* tree is symbolic of the *trishula*, the emblem of Shiva which symbolism has made the tree sacred to him. The trifoliate leaves signify the three functions of Shiva, creation, preservation and destruction, as well as represent his three eyes. Offering of *Bilva* leaves to Shiva is considered effective in removing the sins of three births.

*Shivaratri*, the day Shiva manifested himself in phallic form falls on the fourteenth phase of the moon's wane between the months of *Magha* and *Phalguni*.<sup>24</sup> Daily offering of *Bilva* leaves in this month to the *Siva-linga* is considered highly auspicious for the worshipper. On the *Shivaratri* day the *Lingam* is bathed in milk, decorated and wrapped in the leaves of the *Bilva* tree. Sati worshipped Shiva on this day with *Bilva* fruit and leaves.<sup>25</sup>

In plates 2,3,4 illustrating the *linga* puja, not only the trifoliate leaves of the tree are clearly visible but also the globular fruits. In plate 3, a *sadhu* is standing under the tree and offering trifoliate leaves of the *Bilva* to the *Siva-linga*. A floral garland decorates the *Siva-linga*. In plate 4, a *Nammalvar*, a *shaivite* saint is standing on a pedestal under the *Bilva* tree and two other men are standing with folded hands offering prayers to *Siva-linga*.

*Bilva* tree grows wild but is also planted in homes and temples dedicated to Shiva. The tree is always planted on the north side of the house. Though the tree itself is not worshipped, no worship of Shiva is complete without its leaves offered to him. Its fruit is eaten all over India except in Kerala where the fruit is a symbol of the head of Shiva.<sup>26</sup>



Plate No. 3

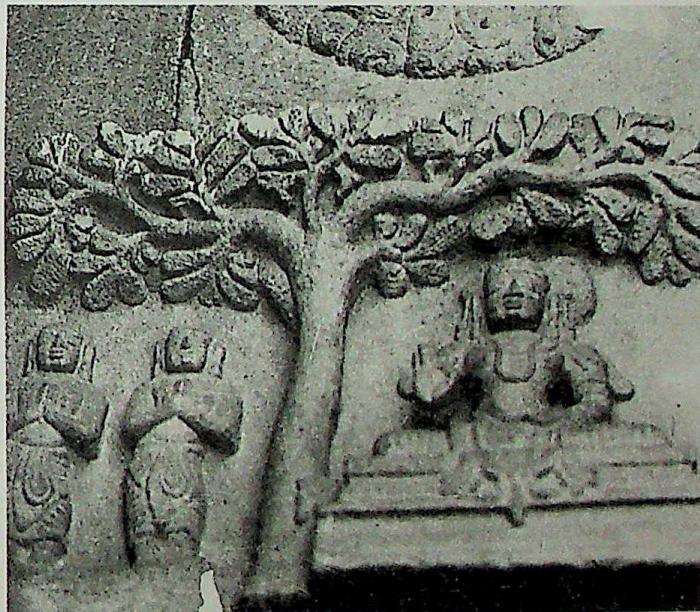


Plate No. 4



Plate No. 5

### ALBIZIA LEBBEK Benth.

*Sirisha* is a deciduous tree with bi-pinnate leaves and greyish bark. It has small, greenish-yellow scented flowers which are arranged in dense heads. The tree flowers from April to July and fruits in September.

A large number of trees sculpted with rounded tops and pinnate leaves could be *Sirisha* but due to the age of the sculpture and corroding of the stone, one cannot categorically claim that this is so. However, some sculptures are very clear. Plate 5 depicts an episode when the *Naga* King Erapatra wished to renounce a sinful life. He had earlier met a *yaksha* at the court of the *Naga* King Sagara who told him of an inscription which could only be deciphered by a *Buddha*. The two *naga* kings took an extraordinary beautiful girl and presents to a frequented spot on the river Ganga, to offer the girl and the presents to anyone who would interpret the inscription. They approached Brahman Narada but he was afraid of losing his reputation as a learned man if he failed to interpret the inscription. Gautama Buddha was at that time dwelling in the deer park at Sarnath. When Erapatra approached Narada, Narada bared his right shoulder and bowed in the direction of the Buddha and



1516  
DOOR JAMB SHOWING THE BODHI TREE INSIDE  
A SQUARE RAILING. SUNGA PERIOD.  
बोदेका से घिरा हुआ बोधि वृक्ष। शुंडकाल।

refused to accept the girl and the presents. Erapatra was in fact more interested in finding Buddha than to find an explanation of the inscription. He went to seek Him first as a *naga* and then as a man and having found Him, worshipped Him.

In this sculpture, Erapatra is seen kneeling down with joined hands and worshipping the *Bodhi* tree *symbolising the Buddha*. The girl he brought to give as a gift is sculpted at the top. The *Bodhi* tree with a platform or a seat under it is *Sirisha*, the *Bodhi* tree of Krakuchchanda.<sup>27</sup> The panel is labelled: *Erapatra, Naga Raja Bhagavato vandate, Erapatra Naga Raja worships (the Bodhi tree) of Buddha.*<sup>28</sup> Inflorescence of *Sirisha* when viewed from the top looks round as seen in this sculpture.

During the Buddhist period very large number of trees were worshipped. Usually a railing called *Vedika* was constructed round the tree and an umbrella placed along it as a sign of royalty. In plate 6 no flower heads are seen but the pinnate leaves are very clear which character by itself is not sufficient to identify the tree. I consider this tree motif to be *Sirisha* as it is one of the *Bodhi* trees, it has pinnate leaves, a clear *vedika* round it with umbrellas on its side, signifying that it is a sacred tree.

Plate No. 6



*Alocasia indica*. Schott

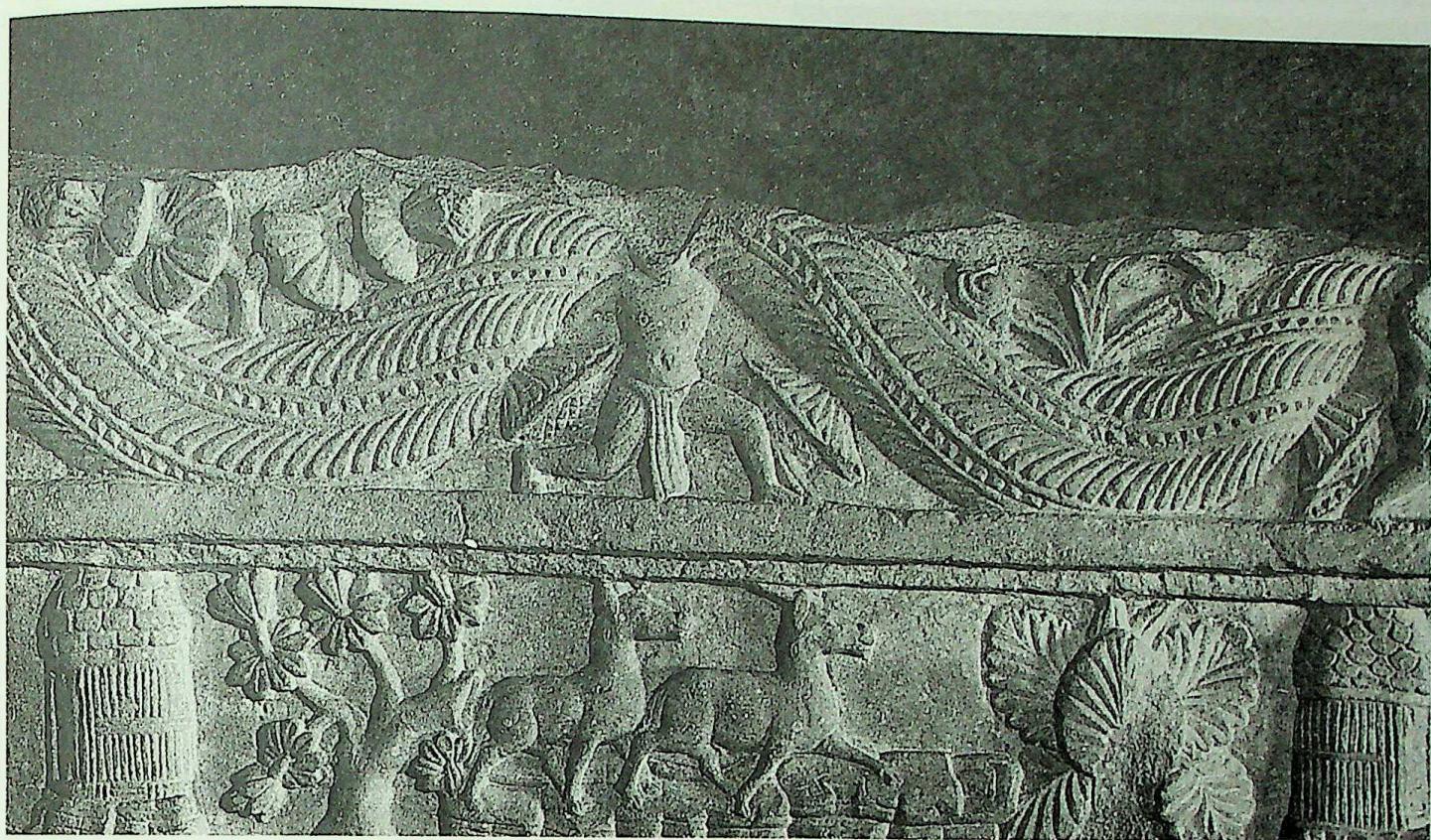


Plate No. 7

### ALOCASIA INDICA (Roxb.) Schott

Giant Taro is a tall aroid with an underground rhizome bearing a swollen edible stem and very large aroid-like leaves above. It is cultivated in Bengal and Assam as a food crop and all over India as an ornamental plant.

Though the plant is of great economic importance, it has no sacred significance, and therefore, its depiction is purely ornamental (pl.7). From the shape of the large, arrow-shaped leaves, the depiction is unmistakably of *Manaka*, the Giant Taro. On the left of the panel is sculpted a young tree of *Saptaparni* showing the stage when new branches arise on the tree. It is an unusual way of depicting the *Saptaparni* tree, i.e., when new branches arise from the centre of leaves arranged like a rosette. This process is repeated during the growing season, with one rosette of leaves arising from the other and the two separated from each other by a stem. The apical group of leaves when not fully opened gives an impression of a bud.



Alstonia scholaris

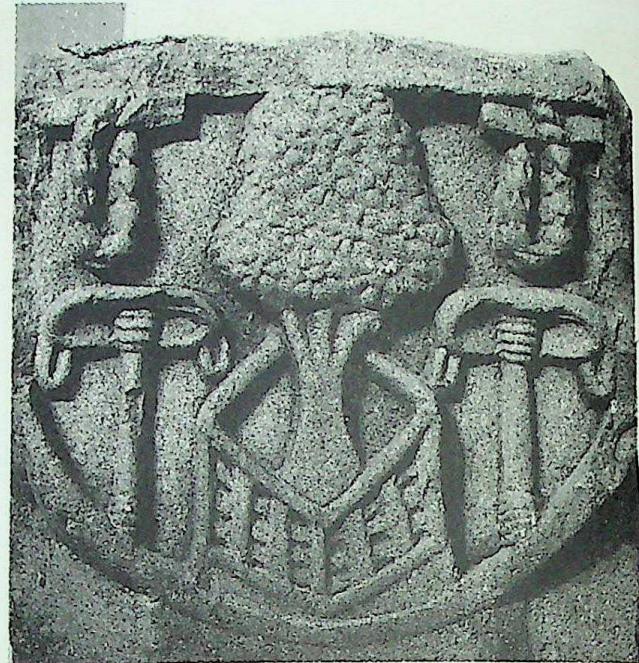


Plate No. 8



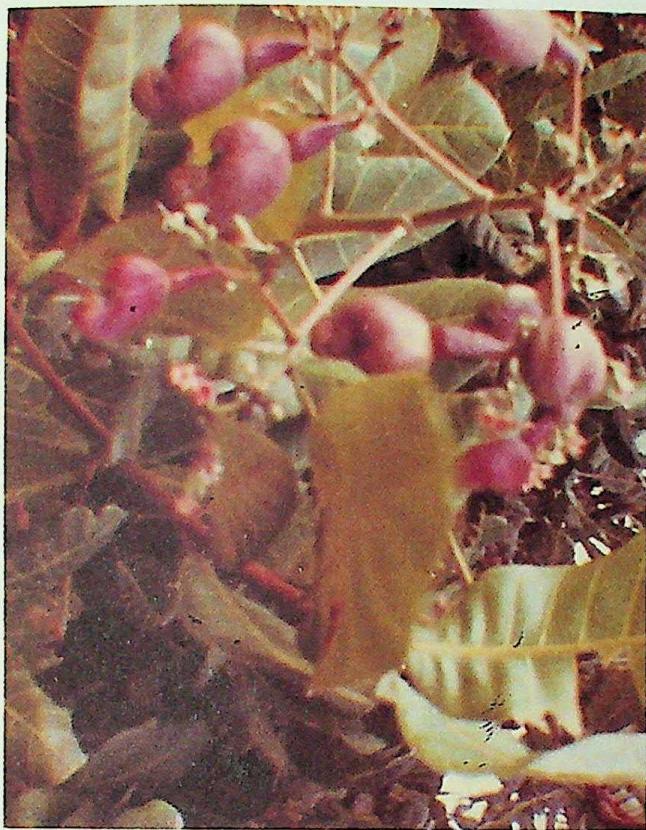
## ALSTONIA SCHOLARIS R.Br.

*Saptaparni* is a medium to large-sized tree widely distributed from Africa to the Pacific coast, common in the west coast of India, cultivated in gardens and as an avenue tree. It has rosettes of leaves at the tip of branches. The number of leaves in a rosette varies from 5-9 though seven is a very common number giving it the popular name *Saptaparni*, seven leaved tree. The greenish coloured clusters of flowers arise from the centre of the rosette and on fruiting, the pods hang down in clusters.

This tree is profusely sculpted on Sanchi stupas, mainly as a part of the forest flora. Garlands are often shown hanging from the tree branches or from the middle of the rosette of leaves. In plate 99 the main tree motif is *Ashvaththa* and just above it on the right is the tree of *Saptaparni* with offerings of garlands to the tree or the tree spirit, a favourite form of worshipping trees till the present day.

In plate 8 the tree has a *vedika* around it and two umbrellas, and two garlands hanging on either side of the tree motif, the tree being worshipped as a *Chaitya Vriksha*. This panel is from Rajasthan where at present the tree does not grow in the wild state. This could be due to the changing environment and the present arid conditions of Rajasthan. In plate 7 is sculpted a stage in the growth of the tree when new shoots arise from the centre of the rosette of leaves. In plate 8 *Saptaparni* tree is a *Chaitya Vriksha* has a *vedika* around it, inside which are sculpted two umbrellas. Garlands are hanging from the upper end of the panel.

*Saptaparni* tree is frequently mentioned in Valmiki's *Ramayana* as one of the trees of the forest flora during that time.<sup>29</sup>



Anacardium occidentale linn.

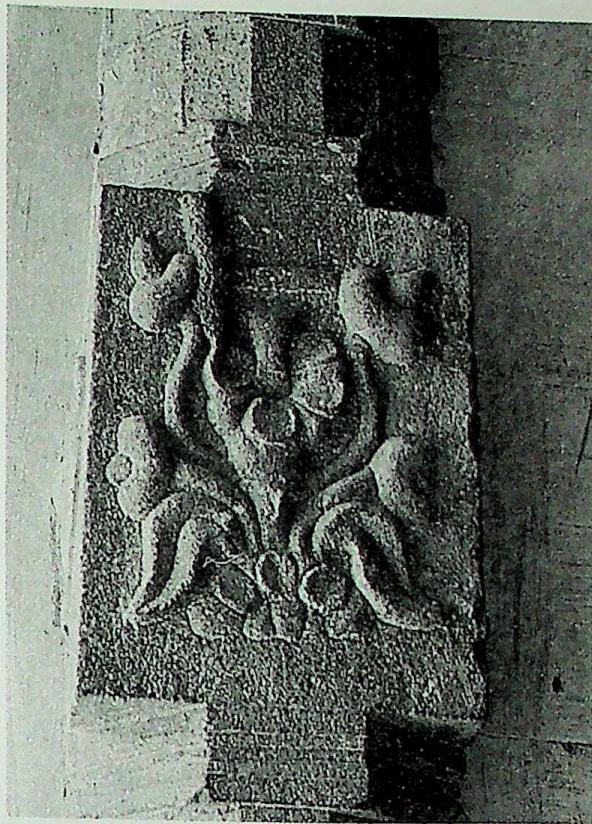


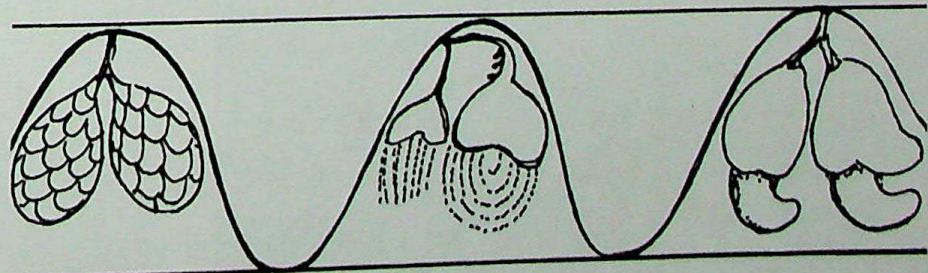
Plate No. 9

### ANACARDIUM OCCIDENTALE Linn.

Cashew nut plant is a native of Brazil and was introduced into India in the 16th century A.D. by the Portuguese. The earliest mention of it is made by Acosta (A.D. 1578) who found it growing in the city gardens of Santa Cruz in the erstwhile State of Cochin.<sup>30</sup> Though the plant is not indigenous to India, it has thrived well on Indian soil and now it is an important cash crop.

The only depiction of the plant complete with flowers and fruits is seen at the Jambukeshvara temple, Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu (pl.9). The depiction of the fruit, cashew nut is slightly stylised. Whereas the sanctum sanctorum and the inner portion of the temple, according to tradition, legend and the temple priests was built 2,500 years ago, the outer pillared hall is much more recent and the Archaeological Survey of India dates it to the 17th century A.D. by which time Cashewnut plant had been introduced into India and was already hundred years old. But the earliest sculpture of the cashewnut is from the Bharhut stupa Balustrade relief, dated C.2nd Cent. B.C. The relief is a broken fragment depicting two fruits of custard apple on the left and two cashewnuts on the right side of the panel.

The flowers, fruits or the plant is not connected with any legend. It having come late to India, it is not offered in worship at temples. Since the plant has no religious associations, the pillar decoration showing the Cashewnut plant motif is purely decorative.



Bharhut Stupa - Balustrade Relief . Sujata and the Ox / the Cat and the Cock

## ANANAS COSMOSUS (Linn.) Merrill

Pineapple is indigenous to Brazil and according to Randhawa it was introduced in India in the 16th century A.D. Acosta mentioned that the fruit was grown profusely in Western India. At present Pineapple is extensively grown in Assam and Bengal.<sup>31</sup>

The author has not come across any epigraphical evidence regarding the sacredness of the Pineapple plant or any mythological story connected with it.

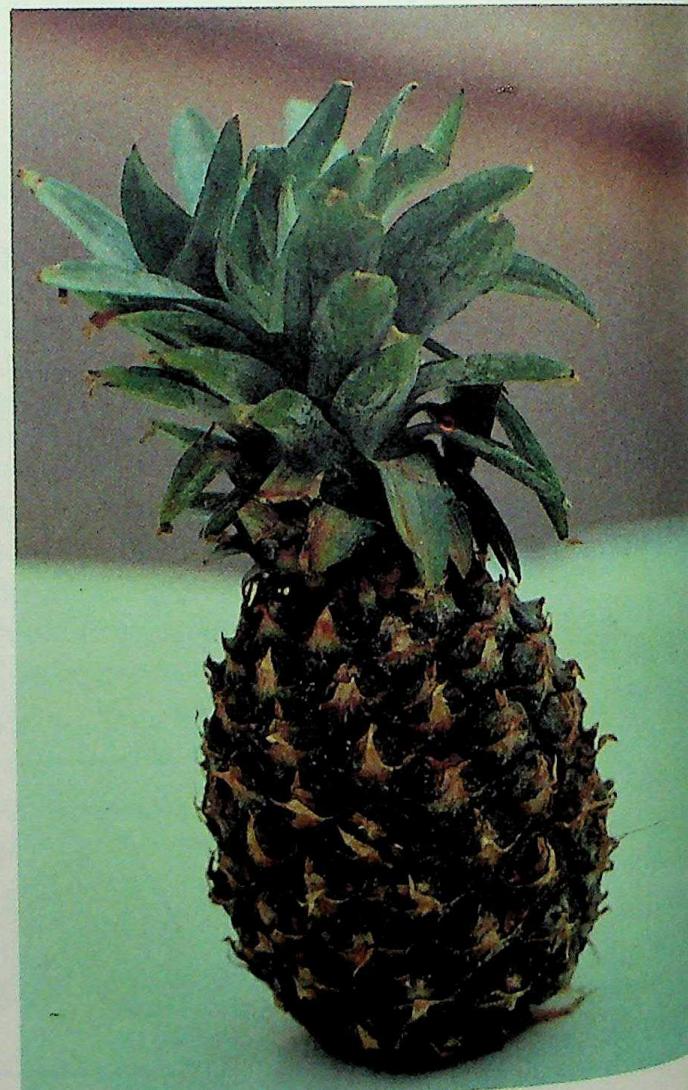
The Pineapple fruit which is a sorosis, along with its succulent, elongated leaves with an acute apex, is clearly depicted on the *vanamala* of Vishnu in his *Varaha avatara* in the Udayagiri cave temples, Madhya Pradesh, dated circa 5th century A.D. (pl.10). The depiction of a Pineapple in a 5th century cave temple shows that the plant must have been growing in India at that early date for the artisans to have been familiar with it. There is no evidence of artisans having come from Brazil at any point in Indian history and the local artisans could not have sculpted it without being familiar with it. The *vanamala* called *Kinjalkini* is believed to be made with 1,000 lotus flowers but in this sculpture it is made of various kinds of fruits and flowers.

The only other temple where there is a depiction of the Pineapple fruit is at Moti-Shah-Ka-Tuk, Shatrunjaya hill complex, Palitana, Gujarat. The small shrine where it is sculpted is white washed and difficult to date. The Shatrunjaya hill Jain temple complex consists of nearly 863 Jain temples and is believed to be more than 1,000 years old.

Plate No. 10



Ananas cosmosus





*Annona squamosa Linn.*

### ANNONA SQUAMOSA (Linn.)

A short-sized, tropical tree *Sitaphala* (Sharifa) is mainly cultivated for its composite, edible fruits. It has simple, alternate leaves and greenish-yellow flowers and fleshy, globular, yellowish-green fruits which are an etaeiro of berries. The tree flowers from May-June and fruits from October-November. The tree thrives in Karnataka and Maharashtra. In the wild state it is seen in Madhya Pradesh. The common Indian name *Sitaphala* is because of a popular belief that Sita, wife of Ramachandra of the epic *Ramayana*, when in exile with her husband, used to eat the fruits of this tree.

There is no religious significance attached to the plant, in spite of it being associated with Sita. But it could be a symbol of fertility as from one composite fruit, a large number of seeds are produced.

The fruit is sculpted on both Hindu and Buddhist temples, in states of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. It is held in the hands of various deities such as Vishnu from Bengal (pl.11); Murugan (pl.12); Kubera from Karnataka Hoysaleshvara temple, 12th century A.D. He is sitting on a pedestal under a canopy from which bunches of mangoes are hanging, and holding a custard apple in his left hand and an *akshamala* in his right hand; as well as in the lower left hand of Shiva in a lintel sculpture showing the Trinity, Kakatiya, 12th Century A.D. Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, and in the hands of various other deities. The best depiction of the *Sitaphala* is from Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh (pl.13), on the *Kalpalata*, the wish-fulfilling creeper where not only the fruit but also the leaves are sculpted.

According to Randhawa, custard apple was introduced into India by the Portuguese in the 16th century,<sup>32</sup> but the tree must have been growing in India from very early times considering it is mentioned in the *Ramayana*, c.2000-1000 B.C., up to A.D. 2000 and sculpted at Bharhut, c.2nd century B.C.



Plate No. 11

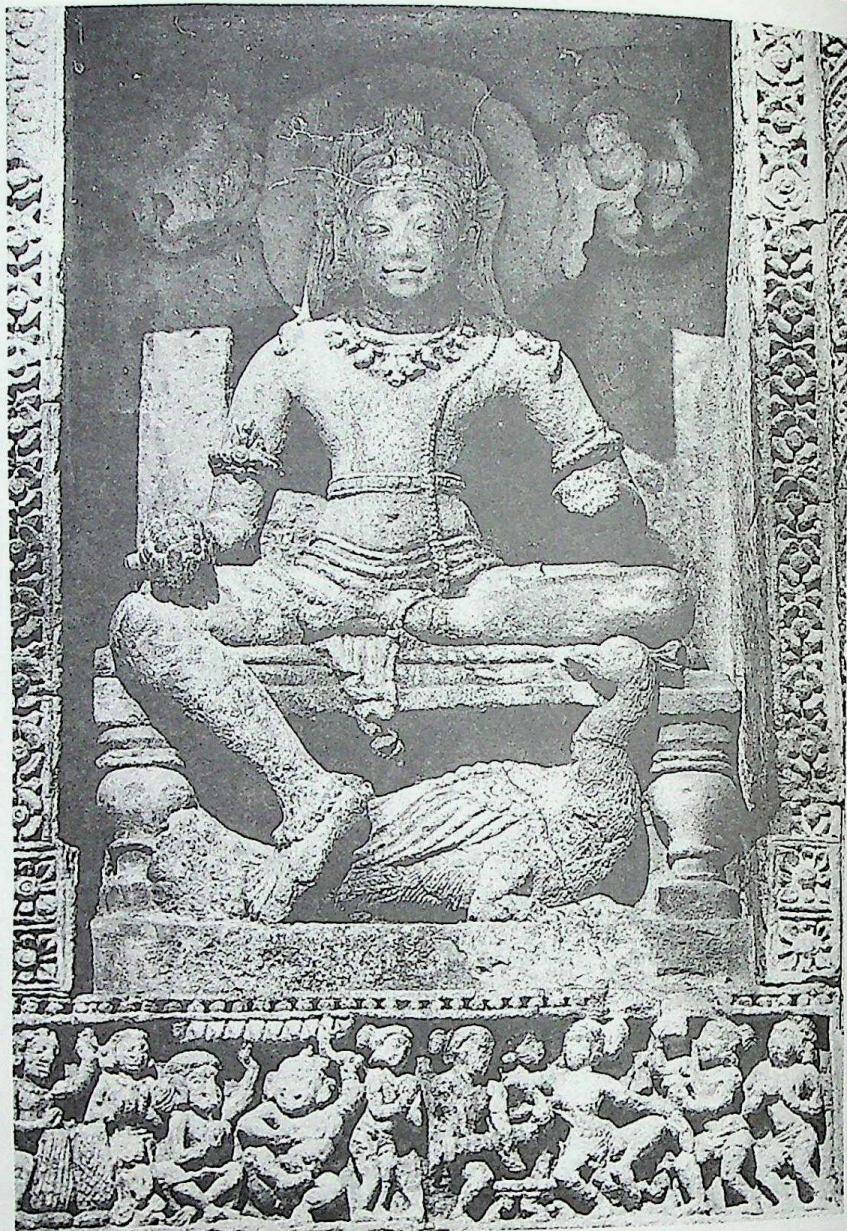
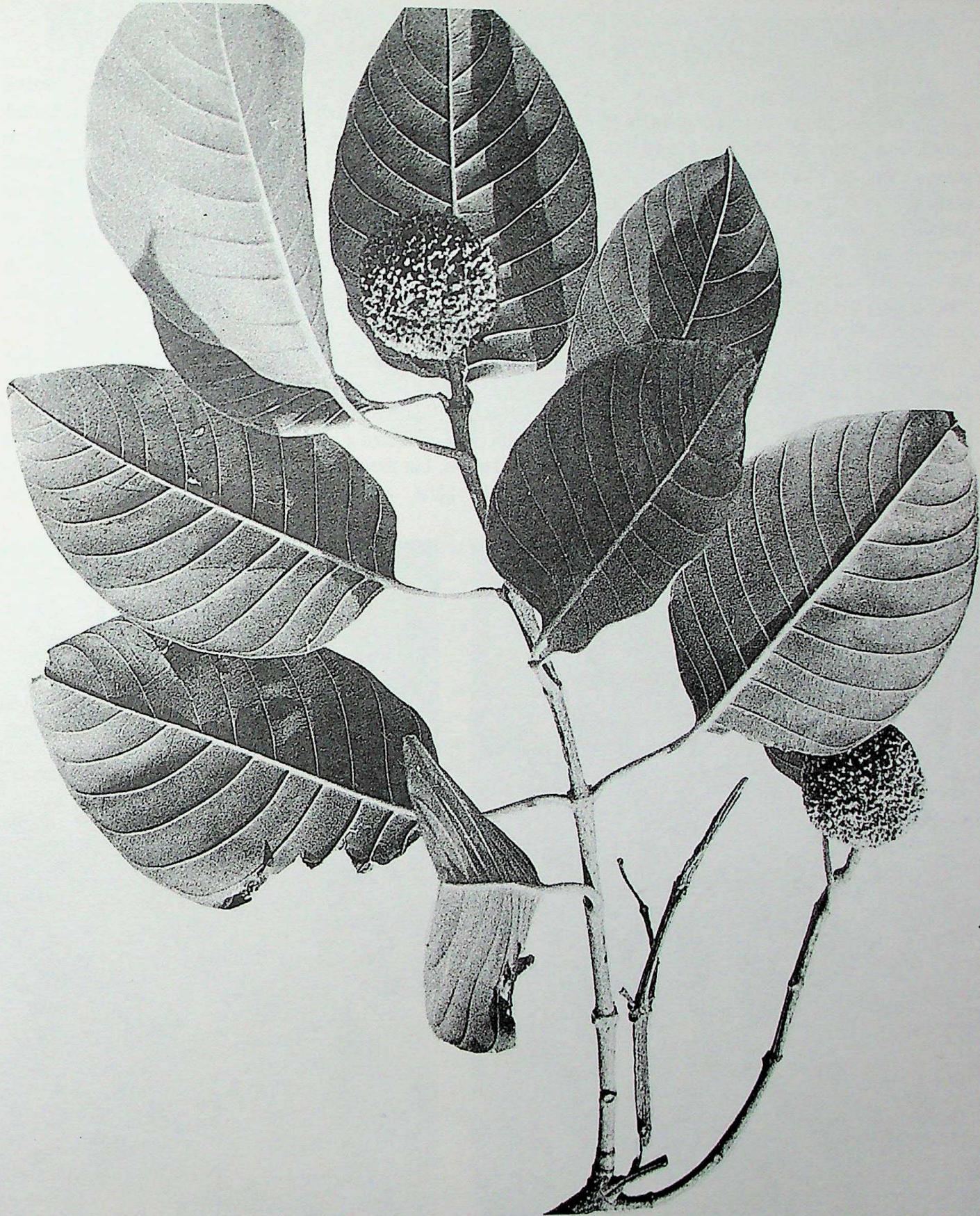


Plate No. 12

Plate No. 13





**Anthocephalus cadamba**

## ANTHOCEPHALUS CADAMBA Miq.

*Kadamba* is a large-sized deciduous tree with large simple leaves. Flowers are yellow coloured, aggregated and condensed into globose heads on drooping branches. The composite fruit, extremely sour to taste, is round with a whitish downy growth when young, which has given an erotic twist to it. And that explains the amorous scenes associated and sculpted under the tree. The tree grows wild on the sub-Himalayan tract from Nepal eastwards to Burma and in the Western ghats. At some point in history it must have been fairly wide-spread particularly in north and Central India as it is commonly depicted on Hindu, Jain and Buddhist places of worship. But due to the changing environment and less humidity, the tree associated with the childhood exploits of Krishna in the surroundings of Vrindavana, has more or less disappeared from that region and is at present only cultivated in gardens. Same is true for Sanchi and Bharhut stupas where it is profusely sculpted but at present no trees of *Kadamba* grow in the vicinity of these shrines.

Two popular legends sculpted on temples find a mention in the *Bhagavata Purana*. The first legend is called *Vastraharana*, stealing the clothes of the *gopis* who had gone for a bath in the river Yamuna and had left their clothes on the banks of the river under a *Kadamba* tree. Krishna took away their clothes and climbed a *Nipa* tree (*Kadamba*). When the *gopis* came out of their bath, they entreated Krishna to return their clothes. Krishna refused saying that clothes were mere outwardly show, *maya*, but the reality, the real self, the soul within was the true essence and could not be disguised.<sup>33</sup> In plate 14 depicting the *vastraharana* episode,



Plate No. 14

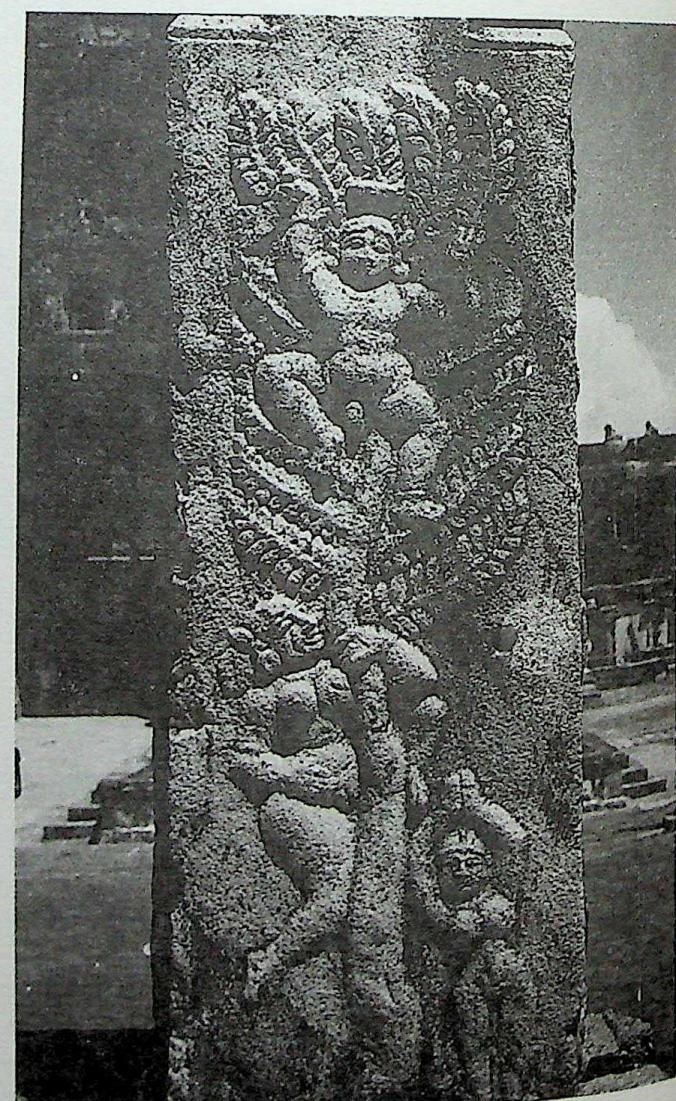


Plate No. 15

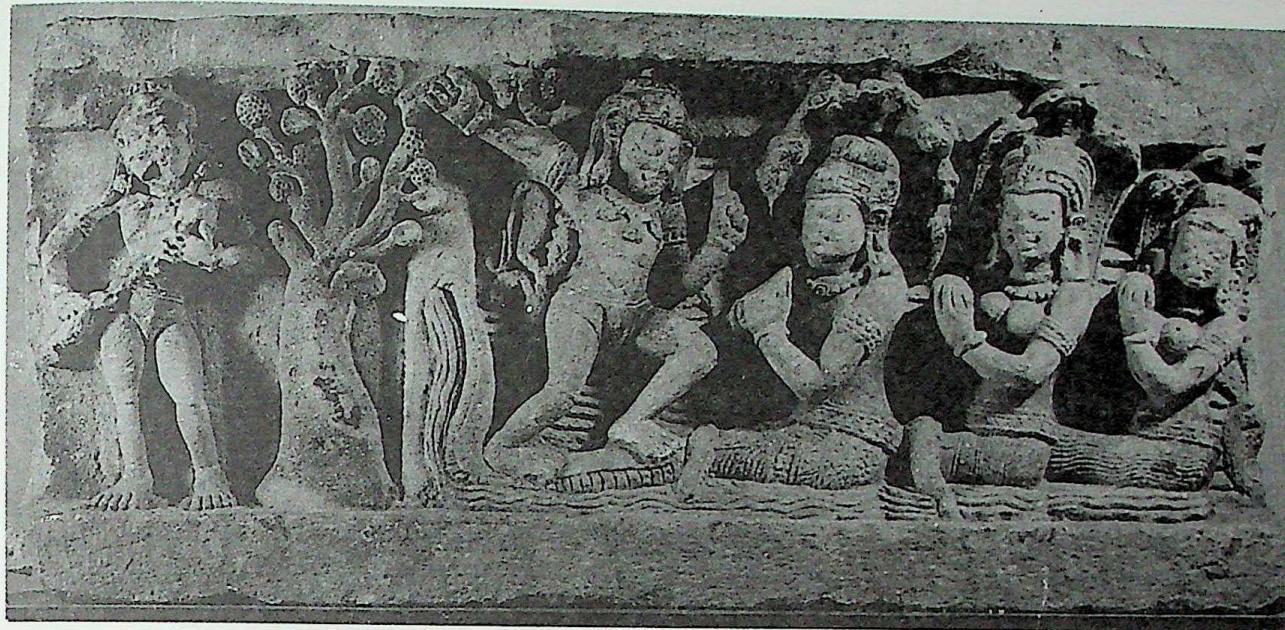


Plate No. 16

*Kadamba* tree is totally stylised and the fuzziness of the globular fruits shown with criss-cross lines. A more natural depiction of the *Kadamba* illustrating the same episode is from Brhadishvara temple, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu (pl.15).

The second legend associating *Kadamba* with Krishna as a young boy is as follows: Kaliya *naga* was living in the river Yamuna along with his numerous wives resulting in the waters of the river getting poisoned. Yamuna river was the main source of water for Vrindavana and the countryside around it. Why Kaliya chose to live in the river Yamuna is explained in the *Bhagavata Purana*. Long ago, on appointed days *Nagas* made offerings of one *naga* to Garuda. But Kaliya, proud of his valour, did not make any offerings and in fact tried to snatch away the offerings made to Garuda by other serpents. Not wanting to lose his prey, Garuda attacked Kaliya. To escape another onslaught by Garuda, Kaliya took shelter in the river Yamuna as there was a curse on Garuda that he would die if he entered the waters of the Yamuna. Long before this episode, Garuda had once caught a fish in the river Yamuna and was about to eat it when Rishi Saubhari asked him not to. But Garuda did not heed his words. The cries of the fish moved the *Rishi* and he cursed Garuda with death if he entered the waters of the Yamuna. Knowing that Garuda will not enter the river Yamuna, Kaliya felt safe in it.



Plate No. 17

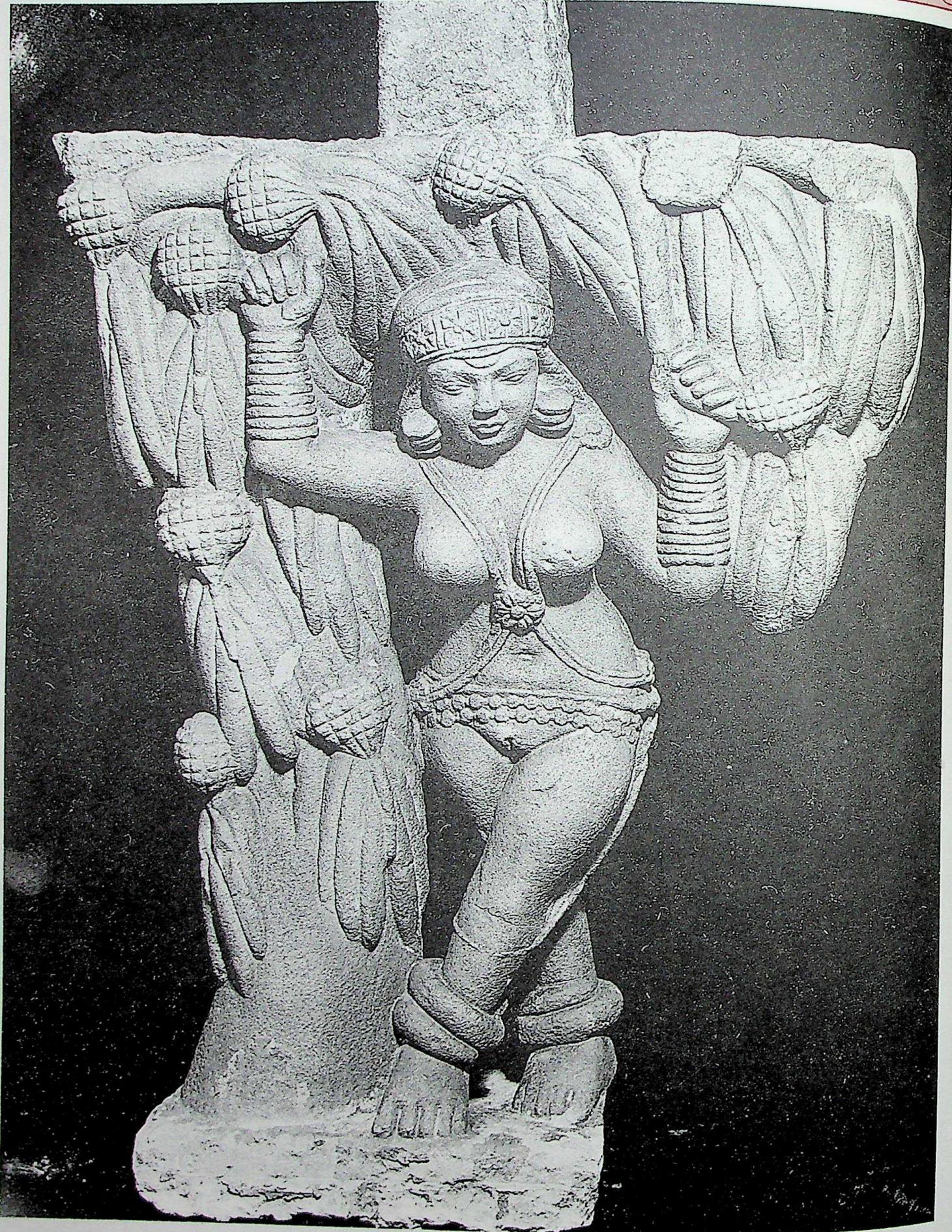


Plate No. 18



Plate No. 19

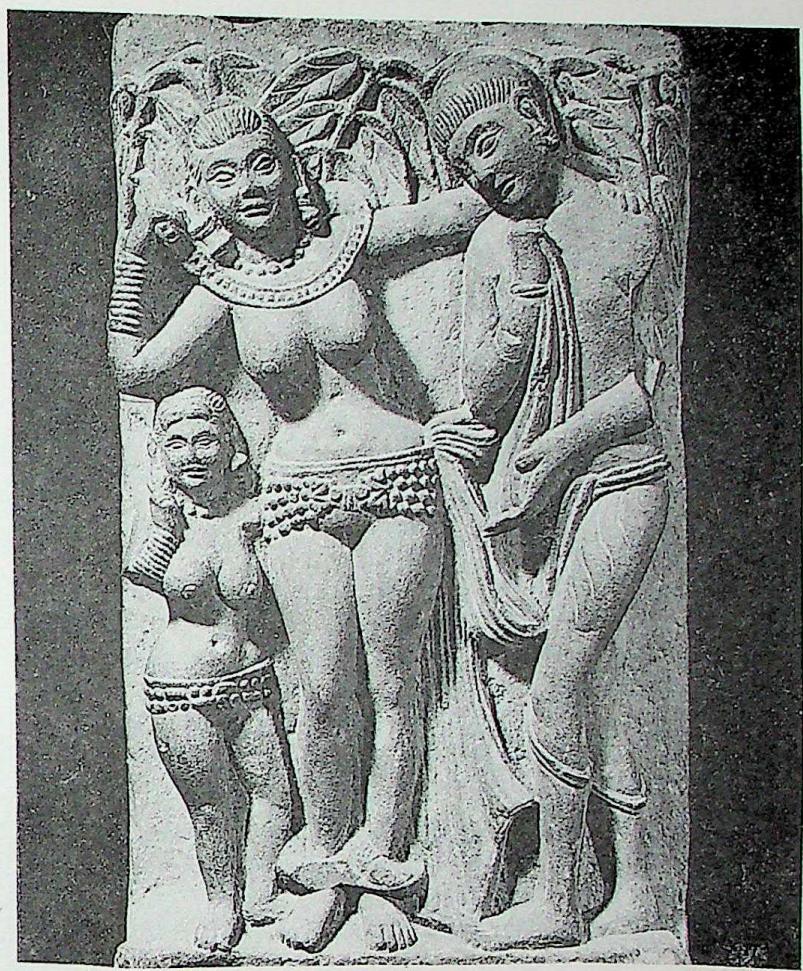


Plate No. 20

Presence of Kaliya and his entourage in the river made life for the people of Braja difficult. The cattle drinking its water were being poisoned and people were afraid to go near it. Hearing constant complaints, Krishna decided to rid the river of its serpent population and climbed a *Kadamba* tree growing on the banks of the river and jumped down. Kaliya spread his hoods and tried to sting Krishna. Krishna stood on the multiple hoods of Kaliya and started dancing, resulting in blood coming out of the cobra's mouth. The wives of Kaliya pleaded with Krishna with joined hands and begged him to spare the life of their husband. Krishna agreed on the condition that Kaliya along with his family and entourage should leave Yamuna river and make his abode in the ocean (pl.16).<sup>34</sup>

*Vastraharana* legend is frequently depicted on temples, both *vaishnava* and *shaiva* but the tree is usually stylised and but for the legend attached to the tree, it would not be identifiable.

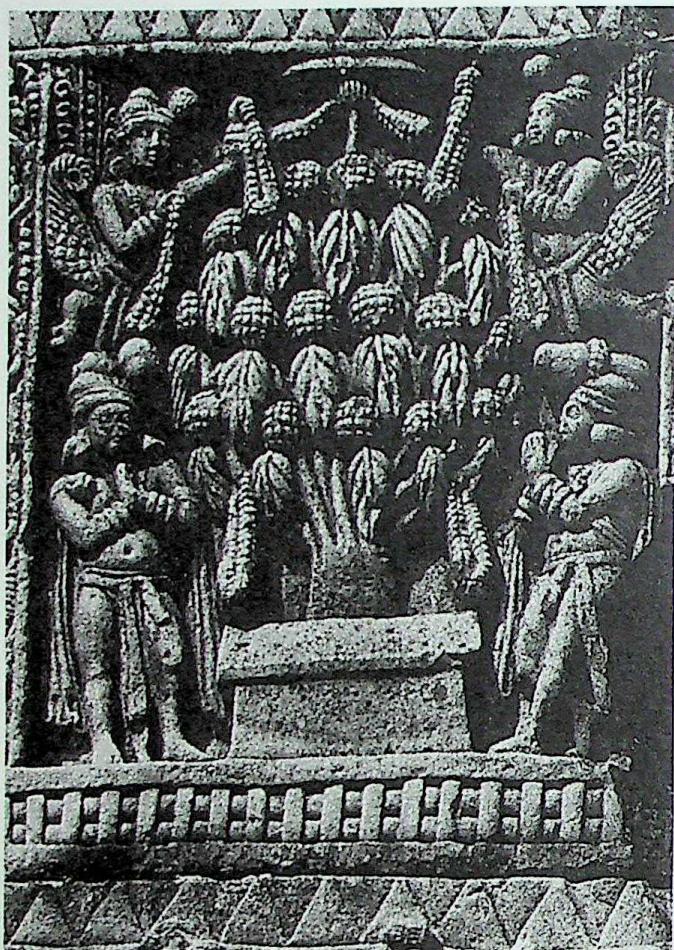


Plate No. 21

*Kadamba* tree is often used as a tree motif along with *Vrikshaka*, a woman standing under the tree. A few well-known sculptures are: plate 17, a woman standing under the tree of *Kadamba* holding a goblet of wine. The large simple leaves of the tree are sculpted to near perfection. In plate 18, a *Vrikshaka* is holding a branch of the *Kadamba* tree, sculpted on the balustrade of the gateway of Sanchi. The globular flower heads are stylised. In plate 19 from Mathura, is seen a woman standing cross-legged under the *Kadamba* tree and performing the sword dance. She is nude except for the jewellery she is wearing particularly the *Mekhala*, a jewelled waist girdle. In her left hand is a sword and her right hand holds a branch of the tree with globular fruits and elliptical leaves of the *Kadamba* tree. Plate 20 depicts a bacchanalian scene. A man trying to cover himself with his *dhoti* and a nude woman wearing only jewellery, with her left arm around his shoulders and her right hand holding her necklace. Standing behind her is

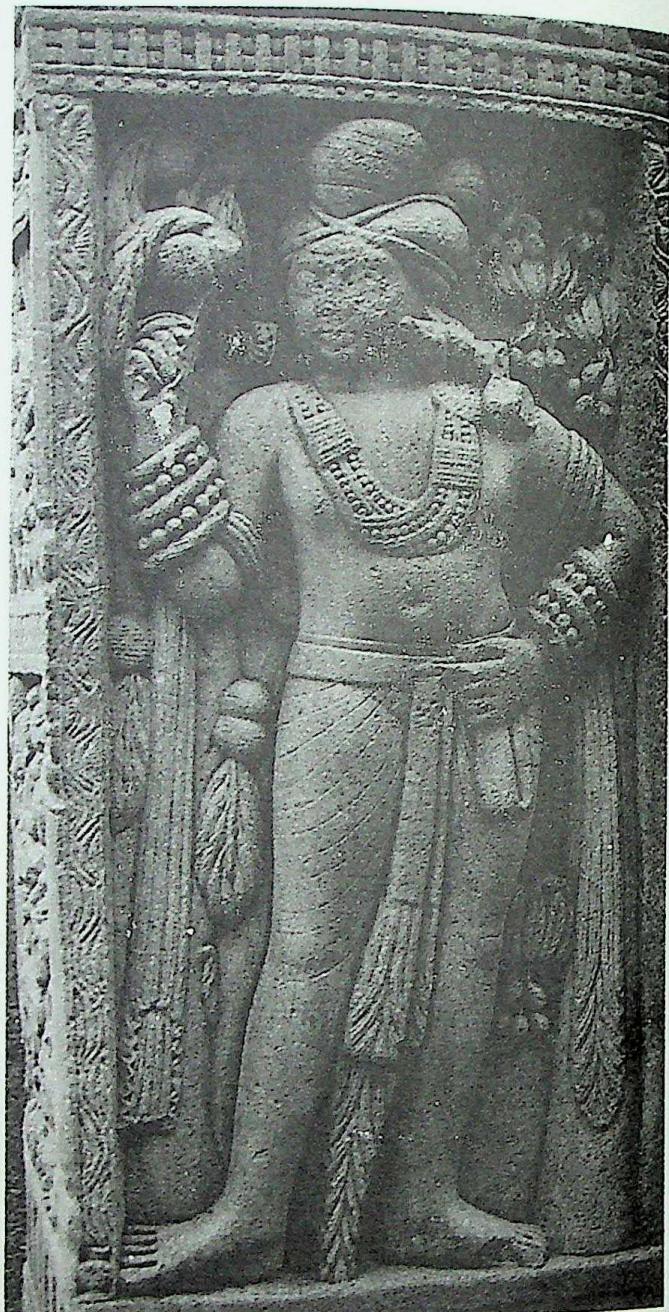


Plate No. 22

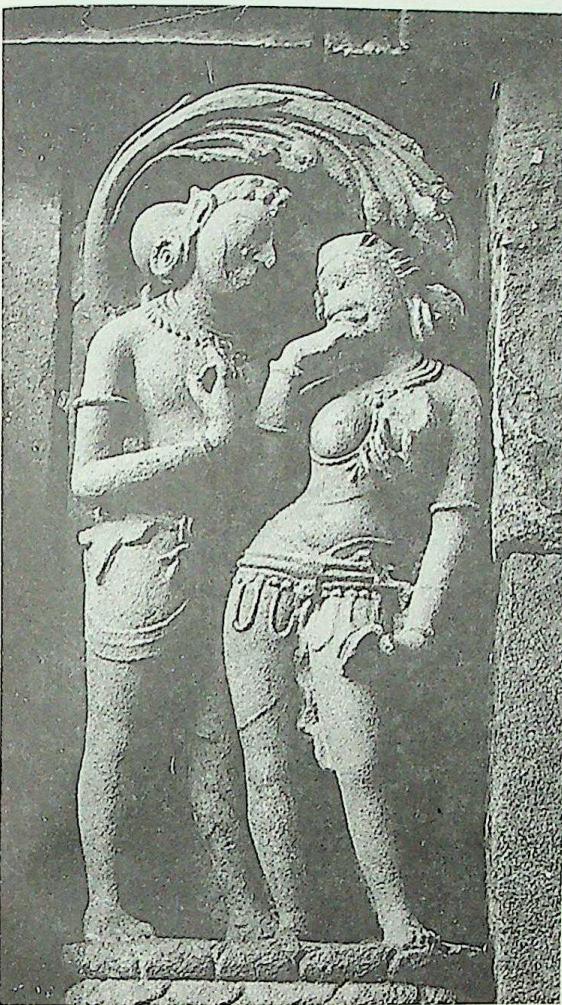


Plate No. 23

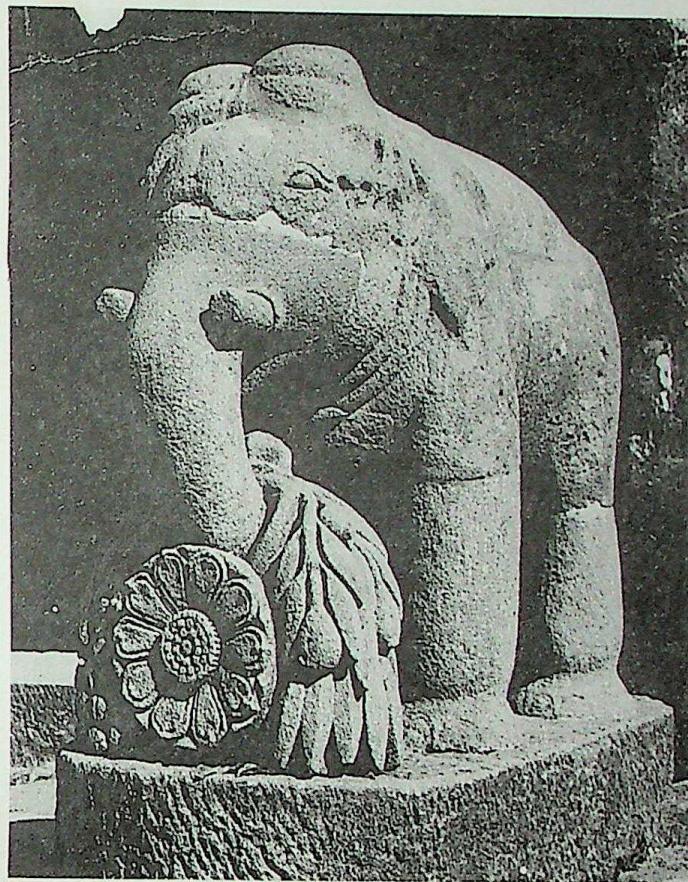


Plate No. 24

her companion, a young nude girl also wearing only jewellery. This group of two women and a man are standing under a tree of *Kadamba* which has fruits and leaves on it.

In the above panels the large simple leaves of the *Kadamba* tree and the round or slightly oval-shaped fruits are clear. Mostly the downy growth on the fruit is shown with lines criss-crossing, giving the effect of small squares patterned on the fruit. In fact, there is no other way to show the downy growth on the fruit except as shown on the terracotta plaque depicting Krishna *vastraharana* scene (pl.14).

In some panels, a *Kadamba* tree is mistaken for an *Ashoka* tree. What on casual study appear to be stalks on which leaves are arranged, are in fact prominent midribs of the leaves and the depth of the carving gives the impression of leaves on both sides of the stalk. They are in fact large-sized leaves of *Kadamba* with veins deeply carved. Randhawa has made the same mistake and identified the *Kadamba* tree as *Ashoka* tree in plates, 23, 27, 32, 48 of 'The Cult of Trees and Tree Worship in Buddhist Hindu Sculpture.'<sup>35</sup>

Plate 21 from Sanchi depicts the worship of the *Kadamba* tree by offerings of floral garlands. The cult of tree worship was very popular in ancient India and to some extent it is still being practised.

In Jain temples a fairly common depiction is of a Jain tutelary deity sitting under a fruit-laden *Kadamba* tree. In Buddhist shrines of Sanchi (pl.22), a *yaksha* is holding a branch bearing the globular fruit of the *Kadamba* tree. Fruits of *Kadamba* are also seen on a panel from Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D. showing the event of Buddha and Nanda's visit to heaven. The amorous scene from Brahmeshvara temple, Bhubaneshwar (pl.23), and from Jhalawar, Rajasthan, both depict a *mithuna* couple under the *Kadamba* tree. This is a fairly common way to sculpt this floral motif. Plate 24 shows an elephant carrying a lotus flower and a branch of the *Kadamba*



Plate No. 25

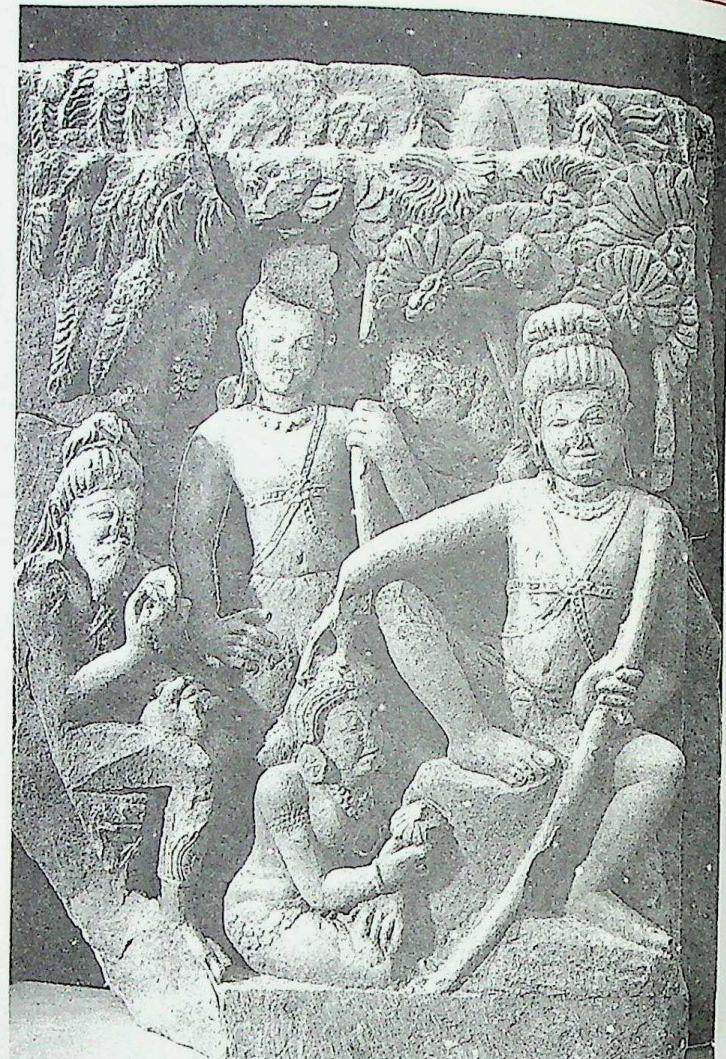


Plate No. 26

tree, the fruit and the leaves of the *Kadamba* being very graphically sculpted. A pillar decoration from Udayagiri, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh shows two lions with the tree of *Kadamba* in the middle. From Gupta temple Deogarh, Madhya Pradesh, scenes from the *Ramayana* are depicted with the *Kadamba* tree as the floral motif. Valmiki's *Ramayana* mentions the presence of the *Kadamba* tree among the forest flora of Central India.<sup>36</sup> Surpanakha episode (pl.25) depicts a scene when Ramachandra during his fourteen years exile when he was staying in a forest of Madhya Pradesh accompanied by his wife Sita and brother Lakshman. Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana proposed marriage first to Rama and then to Lakshman but was rejected by both. In revenge, she tried to harm Sita. Enraged, Lakshman cut off her ears and nose. In plate 26 is another episode from *Ramayana* called *Ahalya uddhara*. Vishnu in his incarnation as Ramachandra during his fourteen years exile, touched a stone with his foot and Ahalya who had been turned into that stone by her husband's curse on a charge of adultery, resumed her form of a woman once again. Both panels (pls.25,26) show the tree as a backdrop to the scenes though the *Kadamba* trees are slightly stylised.



Plate No. 27

### **ARTABOTRYS HEXAPETALUS (Linn.f) Bhandari**

Plate 27 shows a most unusual floral motif, Artobotrys with its curved spirally twisted tip of the pinnate leaf along with a lotus bud. Such an unusual sculpture could only be decorative as there is no epigraphical evidence regarding it. Since the stone on which it is carved is a broken fragment, one cannot say with certainty if there was a legend connected with it. There is no written record in the knowledge of the author. Coming from Bharut one can understand, as many floral motifs were sculpted on Buddhist monuments, Buddhists being great lovers of plants.

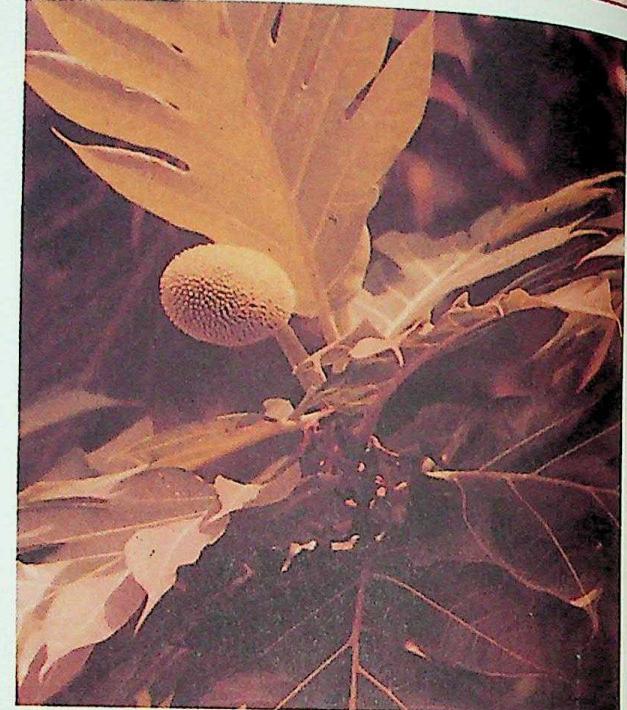
### **ARTOCARPUS INCISA Linn.f**

Bread fruit tree is a spreading tree with very large shining dark green leaves which have serrated margin and a prominent midrib. It bears prickly, greenish to brownish-yellow fruits which are the size of small melons and resemble the jackfruits except for their much smaller size. The tree which is indigenous to Malaya and is cultivated in the tropics, has been successfully introduced into India in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

Bread fruit tree is shown both as a fully grown tree with fruits and leaves, or just leaves and fruit as seen on the door lintel of the Murugan temple, Kalugumalai, Tamil Nadu and on Buddha's begging bowl (pl.28).



Plate No. 28



Artocarpus incisa Linn.

In plate 29 the panel shows a hunting scene. A hunter, probably a king, with his bow and arrow is ready to shoot at the deer who are running away. An interesting depiction of a full grown tree of Bread fruit on which a young maiden out of fear has climbed. Between the hunter (the king) and the Bread fruit tree are deer-running and behind them is a plant with five large-sized capitulas of sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*).

This tree has no sacred association and does not grow in the vicinity of temples where it is sculpted as seen in the sculpture of Bread fruit from Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. An important point to note is that though not indigenous to India, it is sculpted on temples of very early date such as Buddha's begging bowl found at Mathura dated circa 2nd century A.D., and the sculpture from Rani Gumpha cave, Udaygiri, Orissa, dated 2nd century B.C. showing the hunting scene. The fruit and the large leaves with their serrated margin are realistically sculpted. These very early depictions prove that the tree must have been growing in India from very early times for the artisans to have been familiar enough to sculpt them realistically.

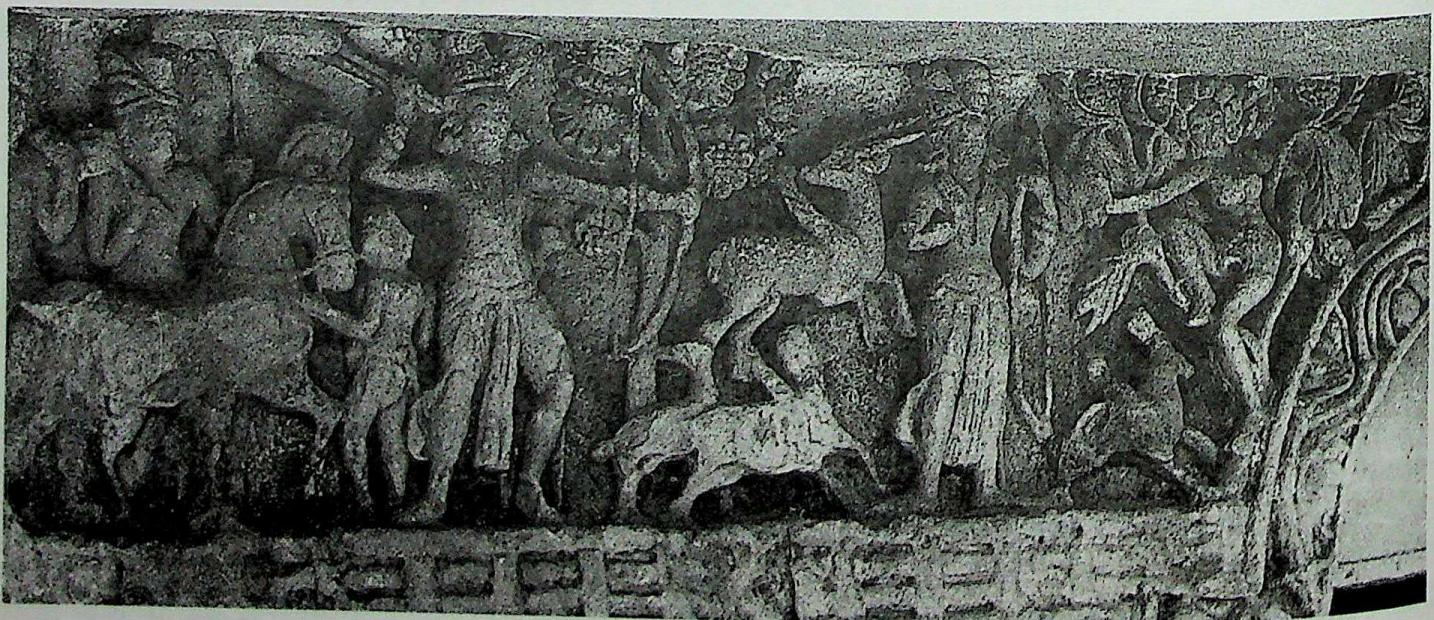
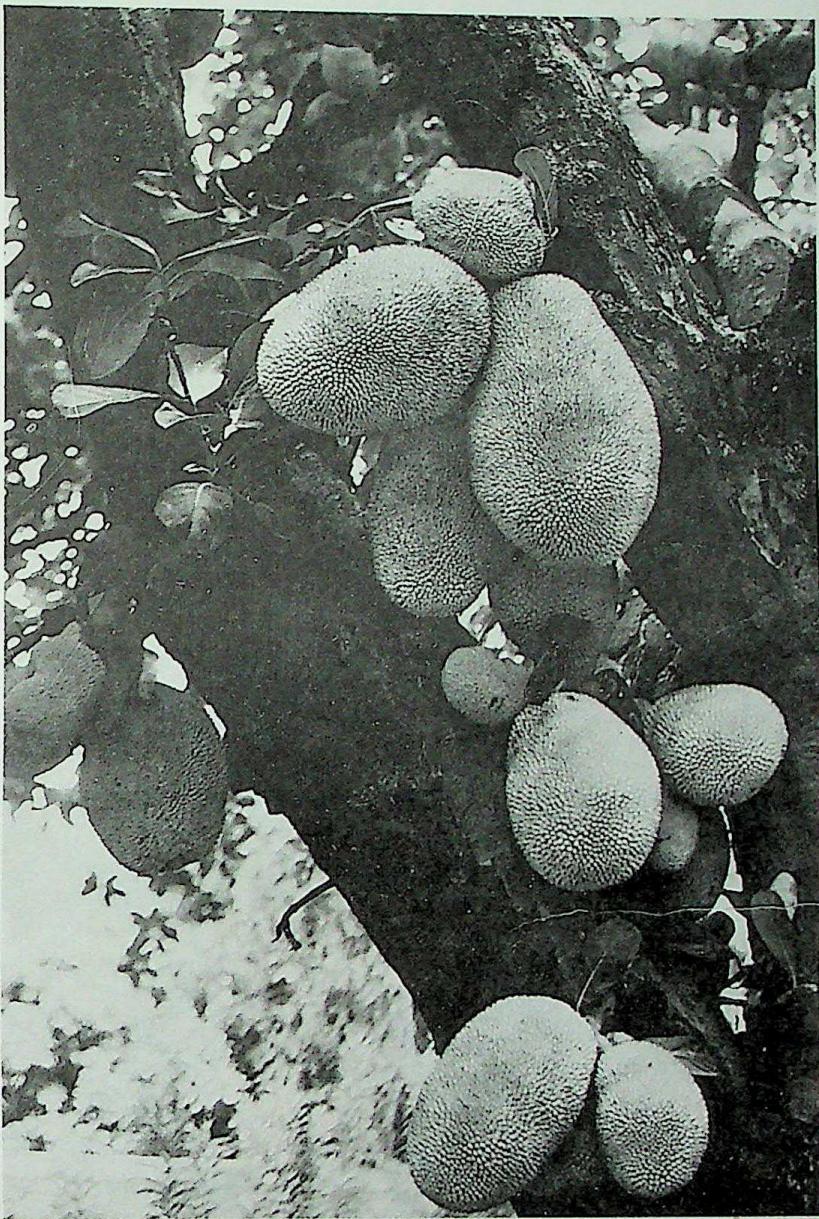


Plate No. 29



Artocarpus heterophyllus

### ARTOCARPUS HETEROPHYLLUS Lam.

The Jackfruit (*Kathal*) tree is a large evergreen tree grown mainly for its edible fruit which can be over 60-76 cms. long and weigh 3-20 kilograms. Compared to the size of the fruit, it has very small elliptic to obovate leaves. The fruit is a sorosis, a composite fruit where the perianth leaves as well as the central axis becomes fleshy and united into a single mass. The fruits are yellowish green in colour and studded with spines. The tree flowers and fruits from May to June.

The best and unmistakable depiction of Jackfruit is on the *Kalpavalli*, the wish fulfilling creeper from Bharhut showing the Jackfruit with a leaf (pl.30). At Meenakshi temple, Madura, a panel shows *linga-puja*



Plate No. 30

being performed under the Jackfruit tree. The tree trunk and the branches have various sizes of Jackfruits hanging from them as happens in nature. The leaves sculpted are true to life. Two *yakshas* or tree spirits are also present on the tree (pl.31). In plate 32 though no fruits are depicted, the small leaves of the Jackfruit tree are very clear. Under the tree sits a five-hooded *Naga devata*, a serpent deity and the tree is being worshipped by two men, and floral garlands as offerings are hanging from the branches of the tree. The reason for identifying the tree as the Jackfruit tree is because firstly, the small leaves resemble the leaves of the Jackfruit tree. Secondly, its leaves are used as a cure for snake-bite and that explains the depiction of a Cobra being worshipped under it.

Gautama Buddha after attaining Enlightenment sat for seven days under the *Bodhi* tree (Ashvattha), then sat for seven days under the *Nyagrodha* tree and finally under the *Muchalinda* tree where he was protected by *Naga Muchalinda*. Like the *Ashvattha*, and the *Nyagrodha*, the *Muchalinda* tree also became sacred. This could possibly be the *Muchalinda* tree under which *Naga Muchalinda* is being worshipped by two men and floral offerings of garlands are hanging on the tree.

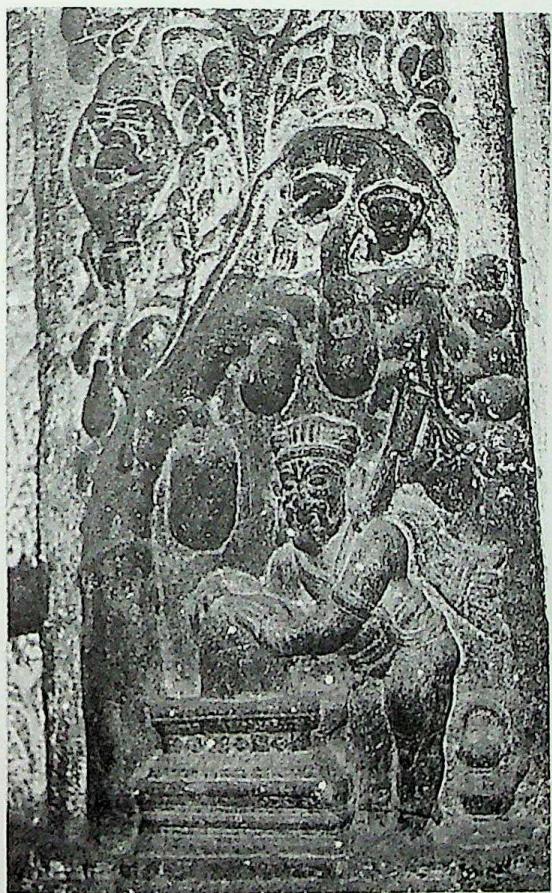


Plate No. 31



Plate No. 32

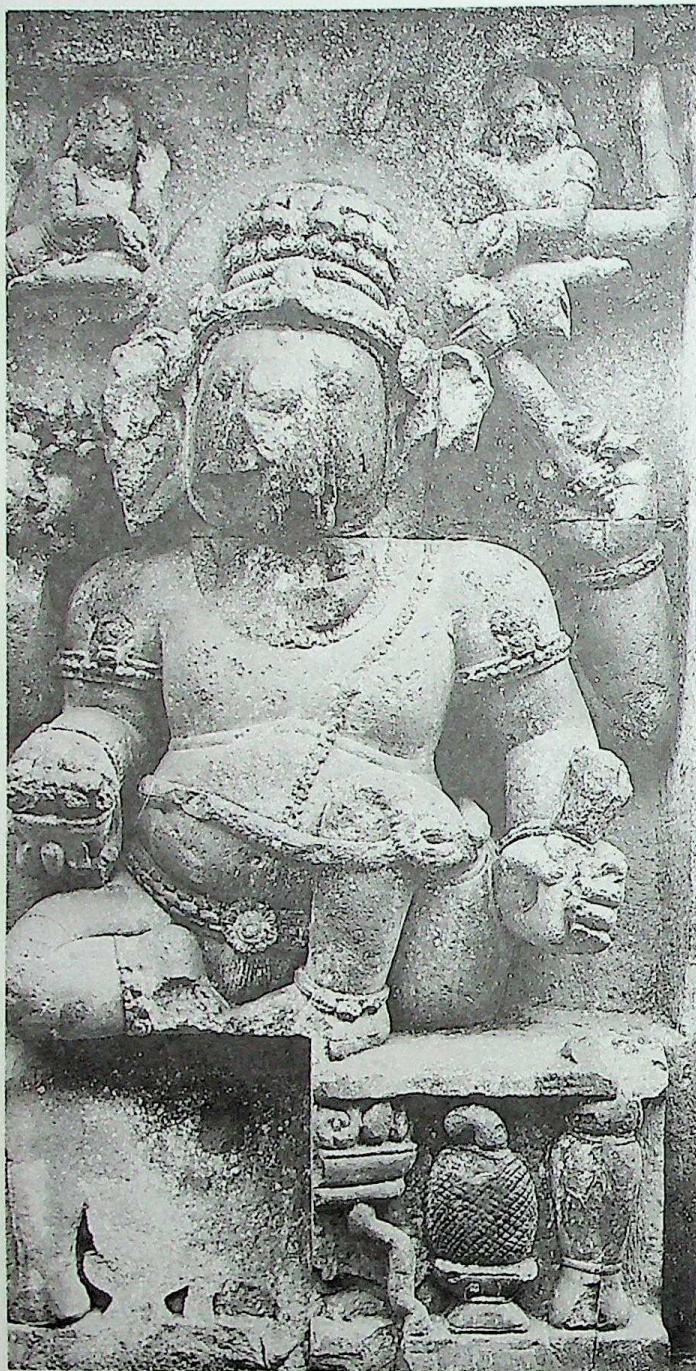


Plate No. 33

On Mohini temple, Bhubaneshwar, Orissa, are panels showing articles of worship lying on a pedestal below a deity, among which is the Jackfruit (pl.33). The Jackfruit is lying on a low stool along with other articles of worship. The deity is unmistakably Ganesha even though his trunk is broken. Ganesha is holding in his normal right hand a bowl full of *modakas*, in his lower left hand a radish and in his upper left hand an axe. His upper right hand appears to be in *abhaya mudra*.

Plate 34 also from the same temple has two figures standing cross-legged and in a dance pose. One of them is carrying the *trishula* and other a *gada*, the emblems of Shiva and Vishnu respectively. Lying on a pedestal below these two figures are two Jackfruits. These panels would imply that Jackfruit is considered sacred to be offered at temples and, therefore, are considered fit to be sculpted on them. The tree is of great economic importance as its fruit is edible.

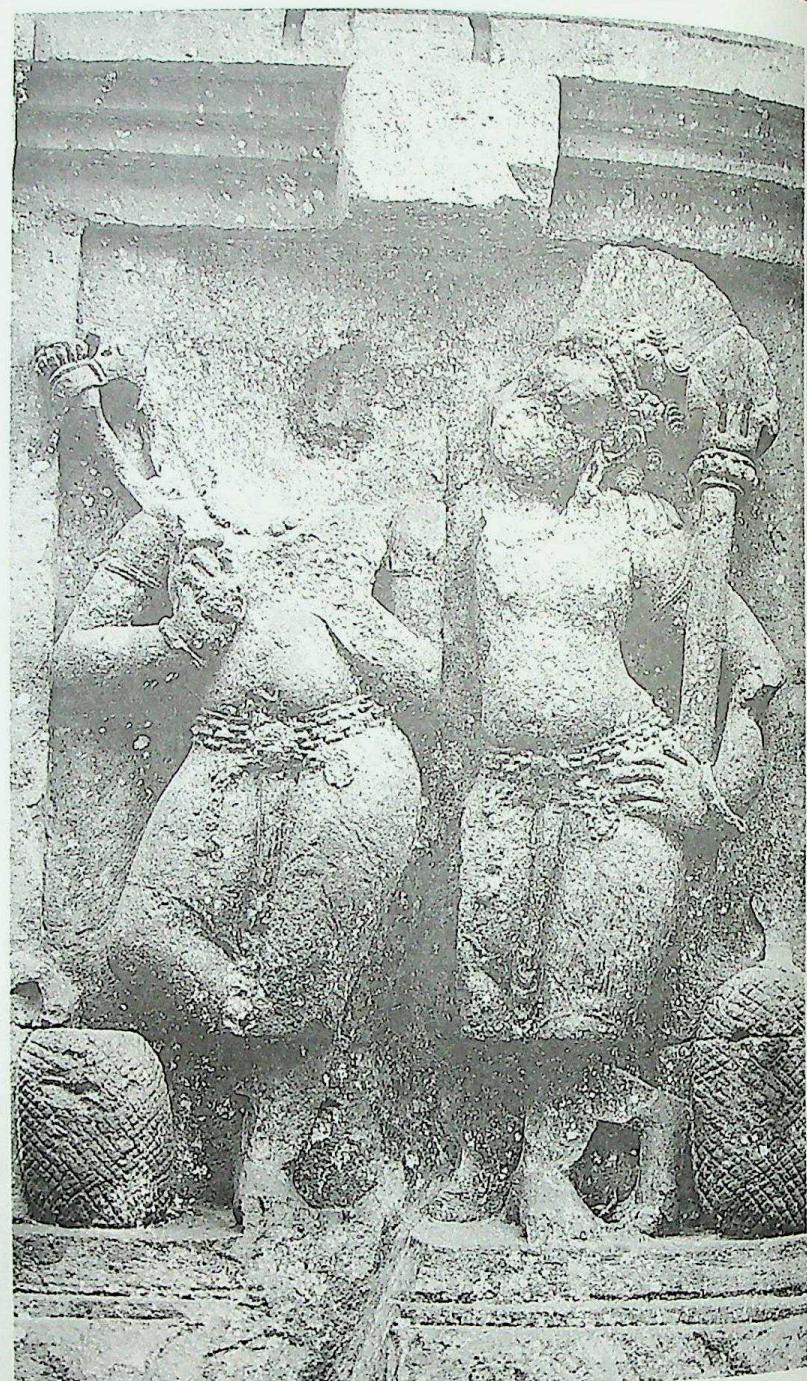


Plate No. 34

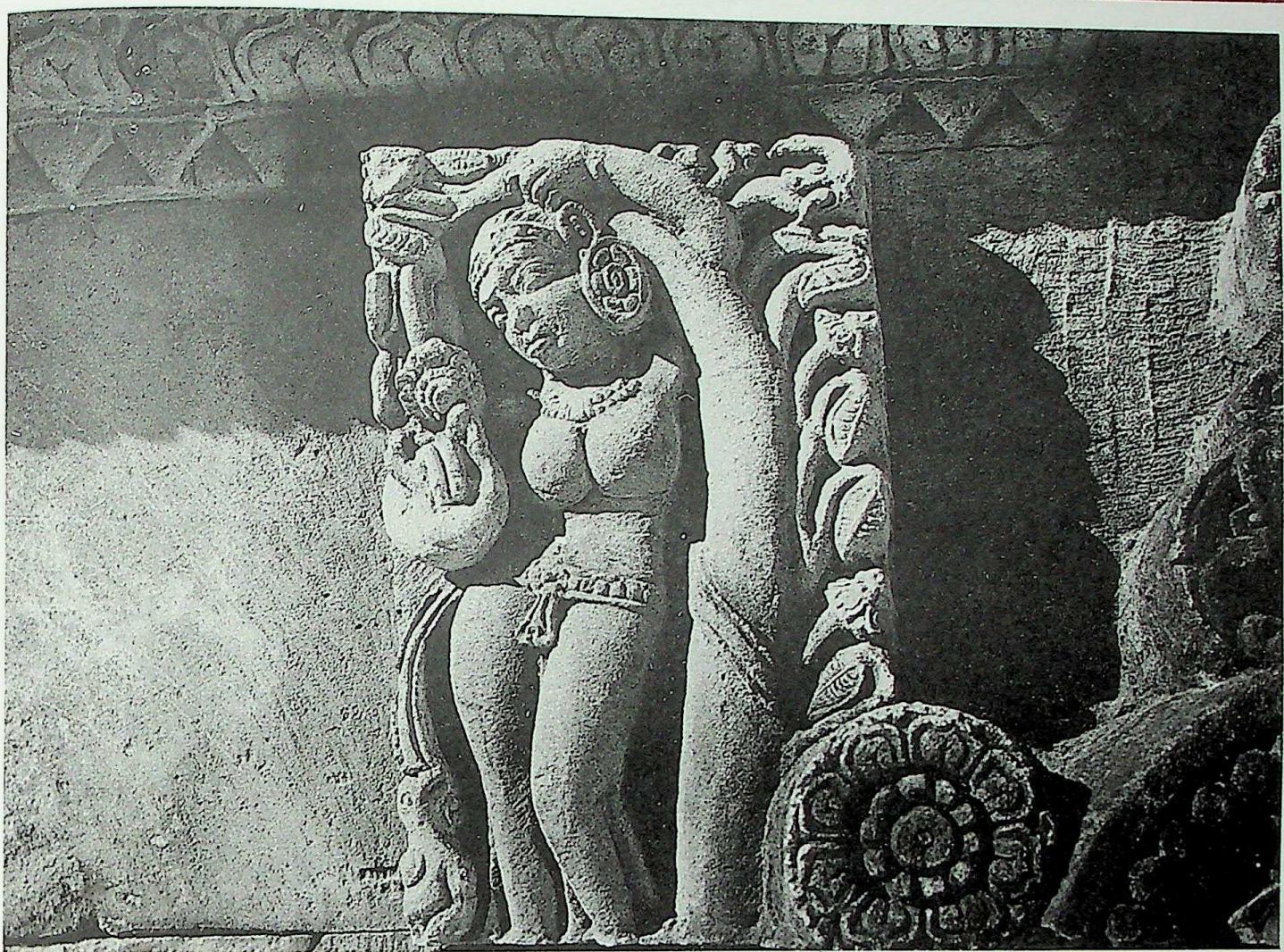


Plate No. 35

### AVERRHOA CARAMBOLA Linn.

*Kamrak* an evergreen tree growing up to 26 m. has flowers springing from the bark. The fruits are acutely 5-angled, ovoid and 4-8 cms. long. They are watery, translucent, fragrant, of a rich amber or golden yellow colour. They are astringent when still green but develop a sweetish-sour acid taste on ripening. It grows throughout India but prefers a tropical, moist climate. The tree flowers from June to September and fruits from September to October.

It is an unusual tree to be sculpted on temples. In plate 35 is a depiction of the tree on Parasamareswar temple, Bhubaneshwar. A *Vrikshaka*, a woman associated with the tree is standing under the tree of *Kamrak* which bears acutely angled ripe fruits arising from the bark. The *Vrikshaka* is standing in the *tribhanga* or the three-fold pose with one arm round the tree trunk. This is the characteristic *dohada* pose of the *Vrikshakas*. *Dohada* is a pregnancy longing when often women desire sweet-sour food. Fruits of *Kamrak* answer to this description and are in fact eaten by women during pregnancy.

The sculpture at first glance looks odd but since the flowers arise from the bark, obviously the fruits will also arise straight from the bark. In the above floral motif, only the acutely-angled fruits arising from the tree bark are sculpted.



Bamboo grove

### BAMBUSA Species Schreb.

Bamboos are giant grasses with a stout rootstock. They form dense clumps of immense height reaching up to 36 m. or more. The plants are characteristic and not easily mistaken. Though Bamboos grow extensively in India, particularly in the north-east and are of great economic importance, they are seen depicted on only two places of worship. Meenakshi temple, Madura in Tamil Nadu and Sanchi *Stupa* in Madhya Pradesh. First is a *shaiva* temple and the second is a Buddhist shrine. Not only are the two places separated by great distance but also in time. Sanchi *stupa* is dated circa 1st century B.C. and Meenakshi temple as 17th century A.D. But like most South Indian temples, the exact date is difficult to ascertain as the temple complex has been enlarged at various times by various kings. Meenakshi temple being a *shaiva* temple, the legends sculpted on the two panels depict a *Siva-linga* being worshipped under the Bamboo plant by a man (pl.36). In plate 37, a *Siva-linga* is present under the Bamboo plant and a crow is sitting on the pedestal of the *Siva-linga* offering worship. Crow is a sacred bird in Hindu mythology. The two panels of the bamboo plant are white-washed but even then the identification of the floral motif is unmistakable.

The best depiction of the Bamboo plant is at Sanchi (pl.38). Buddha was fond of staying at *Venuvana*, the bamboo forest at Rajgir which was gifted to him by King Ajatasatru. Buddha is shown being worshipped symbolically as an empty seat under the mango tree. There are two clumps of bamboo plants on either side of the panel. Apart from a tree of *Naga Kesar* in flower and a mango tree with bunches of mangoes hanging, there is also an unidentified tree.

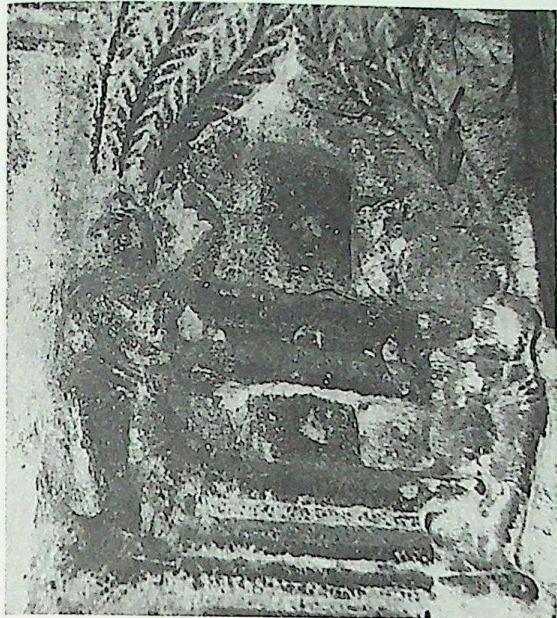


Plate No. 36

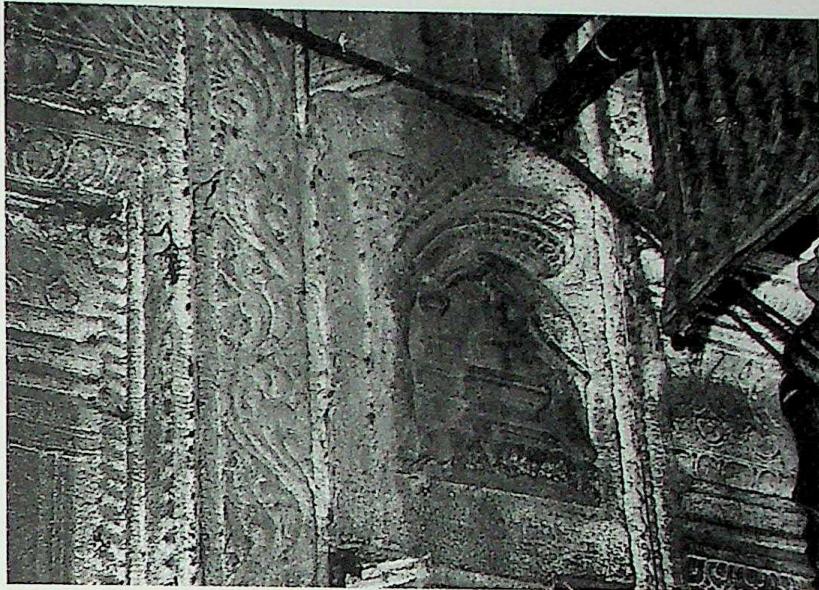


Plate No. 37



Plate No. 38

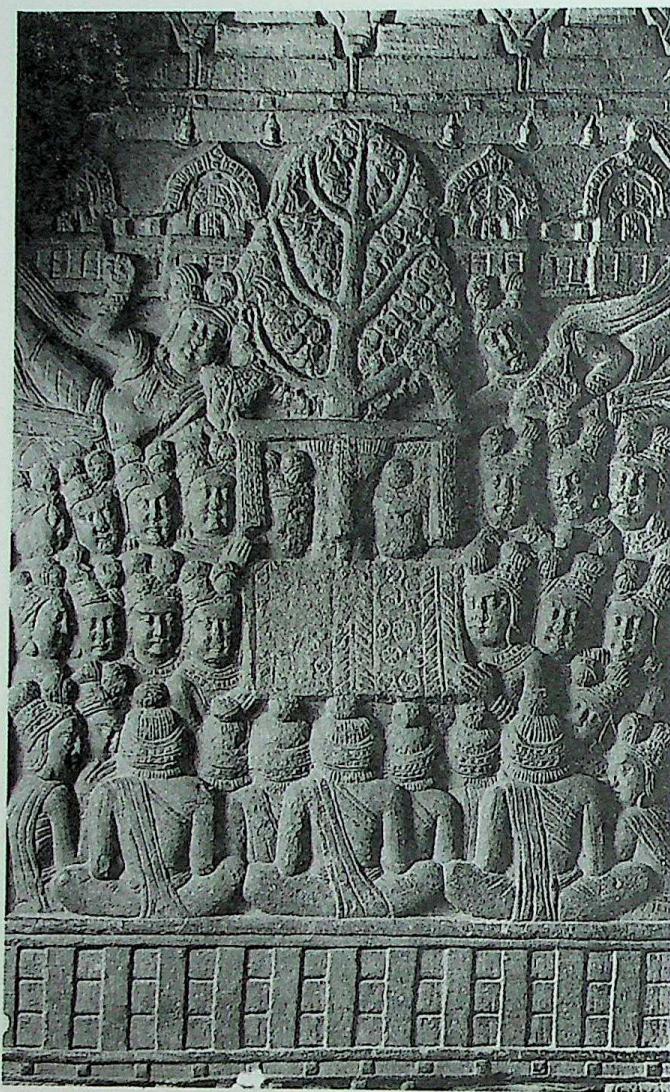


Plate No. 39

## BAUHINIA VARIEGATA Linn.

*Kachnar*, a medium-sized flowering tree, flowers in the spring from March to April. Flowers are white, pink or purple. The characteristic features of the tree are the two lobes of the leaf. It is of great medicinal value and the flower buds are eaten as a vegetable.

The tree is considered a *Bodhi* tree by the Buddhists. In plate 39 is depicted a tree of *Bauhinia*, i.e., *Kachnar* complete with its trunk, branches and bi-lobed leaves. A railing (*vedika*) surrounds the tree. All round the tree men are sitting and worshipping it. On either side of it two flying *gandharvas* are seen, also worshipping the tree.

Dr. Vogel has pointed that the leaves of the tree sculpted above the two ascetics (plate XLIII, fig.6) are certainly of a *Bauhinia*, the peculiarity of whose foliage are most faithfully reproduced.<sup>37</sup>

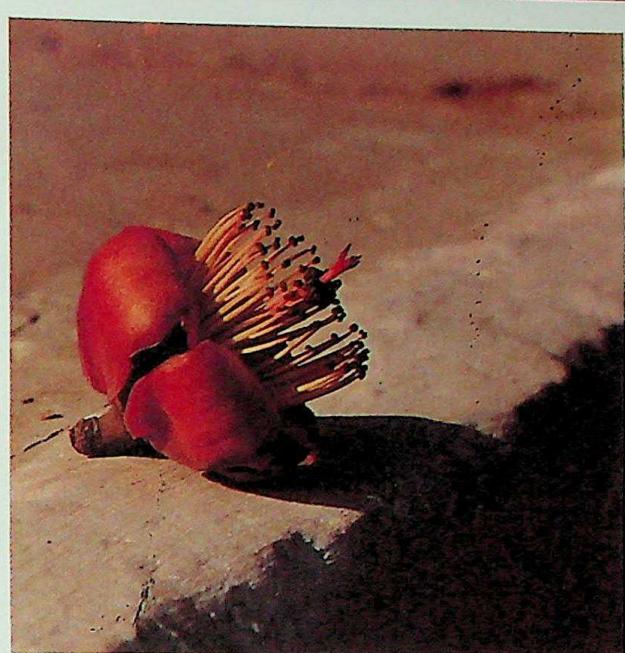
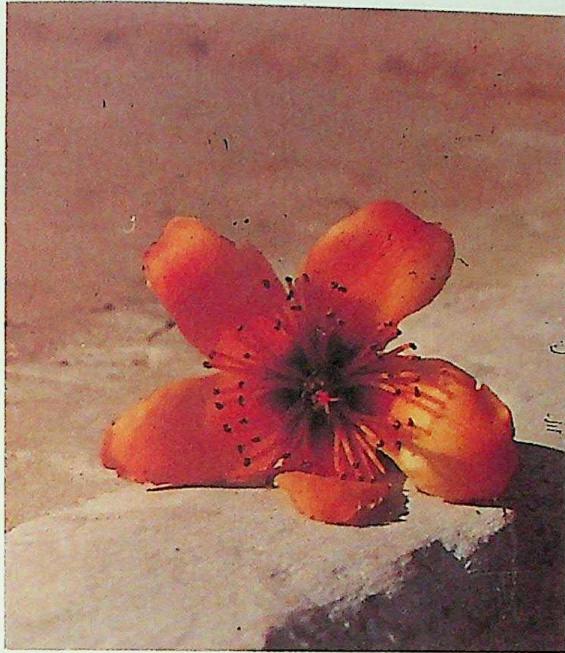
In fact *Bauhinia* leaves are bi-lobed and the leaves depicted in the panel that he mentions are very different. Such leaves are sculpted on many Gandhara panels and are difficult to identify. Very likely they are stylised.

## BOMBAX CEIBA Linn.

*Salmali* is a large, handsome, deciduous tree forming a spreading crown of compound leaves with 5-7 lanceolate leaflets. The flowers are large, bright red in colour, and the fruits are woody capsules with copious floss when ripe and the tree trunk is covered with prickles. The tree flowers from February to March and fruits from April to May.

*Salmali*, a sacred tree, grows wild in the north Indian deciduous forests particularly in the Eastern sub-Himalayan tract as well as in Karnataka. It starts flowering when the tree is without leaves. The flowers are large with five prominent fleshy petals. When young, the stamens are aggregated in the centre and if seen from above give a ball-like appearance. When the flower opens up fully, the stamens protrude out of the flower petals as seen on the Rajiva Lochana temple, Rajim, District Raipur, Madhya Pradesh.

In plate 40, Hariti and Panchika are standing under the *Salmali* tree. Hariti earlier in her life was a cannibal and used to eat the children of the citizens of Rajgir in Bihar. The citizens complained about her to Gautama Buddha. To teach Hariti a lesson, Buddha hid one of her five hundred children. Not finding her missing child, Hariti went about like a mad woman. Gautama Buddha then counselled with her and she realised the pain she must have inflicted on thousands of parents whose children she had devoured. Thereafter, she became a disciple of Gautama Buddha and gave up her cannibalistic habit.<sup>38</sup>



Bombax ceiba Linn.

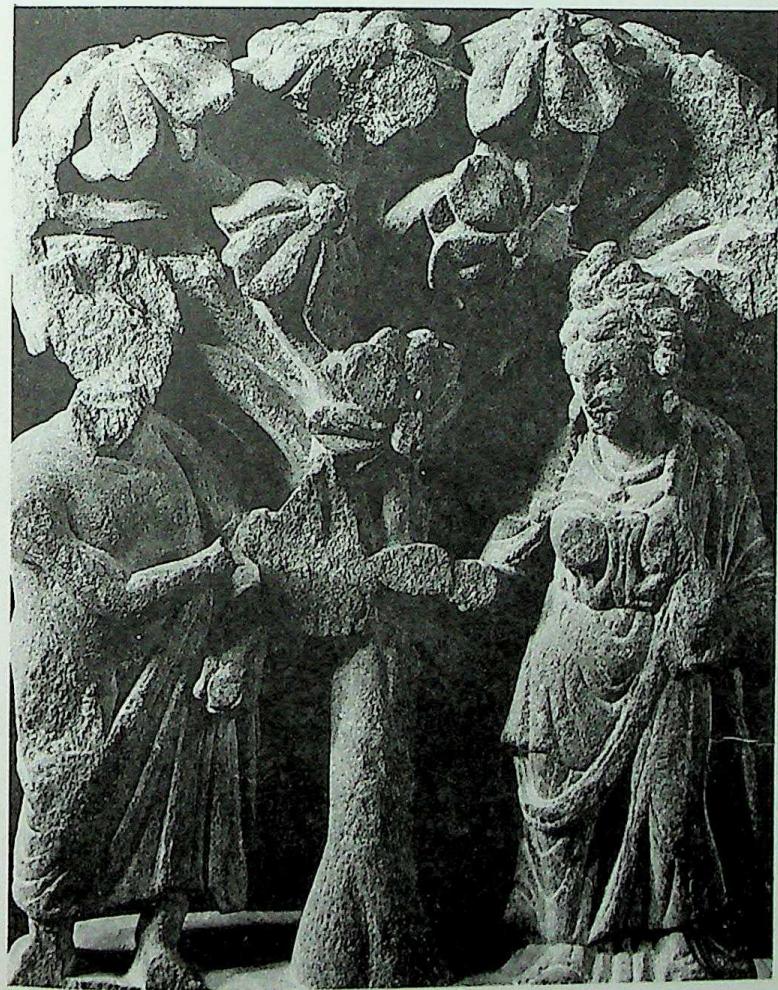


Plate No. 40



Plate No. 41

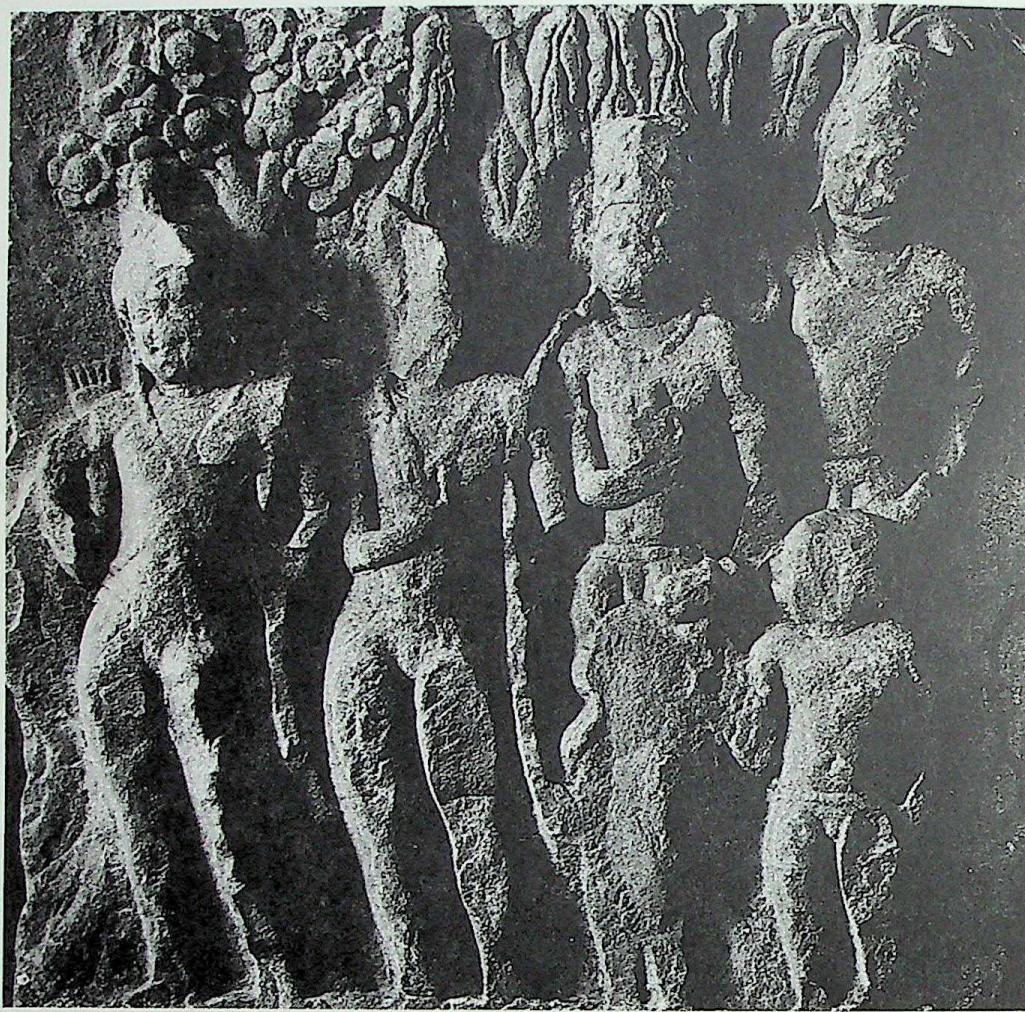


Plate No. 42

Plate 41 depicts Maya Devi, the mother of Siddhartha Gautama holding a branch of the *Salmali* tree when the birth pangs started and Siddhartha was born. The popular belief is that Siddhartha was born under the *Sala* tree but other trees associated with the birth stories of Siddhartha include the *Ashoka*, the *Plaksha* and the mango trees.

The *Salmali* tree is not mentioned as the tree under which Siddhartha was born. Since none of the trees mentioned under which Siddhartha is believed to have been born, grew in Gandhara, the artisans could not have been familiar with them. Very likely the artisans sculpting the tree associated with the legend, sculpted a tree with large five-petaled flowers on a leafless tree which happened to resemble the *Salmali* tree. Gandhara sculptures of men and women have Hellenistic features.

Plate 42 depicts a scene from the *Ramayana* showing a group of five, two monkey-faced beings, Hanuman and Sugriva and a child. The extreme left figure is carrying a quiver with five arrows and is standing under a tree of *Salmali*. The five petals of the flower curve backwards when the flower is fully open and if the stamens are not fully developed, collectively they appear round as a ball as seen in this plate. When the flower whose petals are curved backwards is viewed from the top, the petals appear to be slightly round.

In Nadia, Sirohi district, Rajasthan, a 7th century temple has a panel with the image of Mahavira, the Jain Tirthankara flanked by attendant divinities, Indra on the right and Upendra on the left. Behind the images *Salmali* flowers are sculpted.

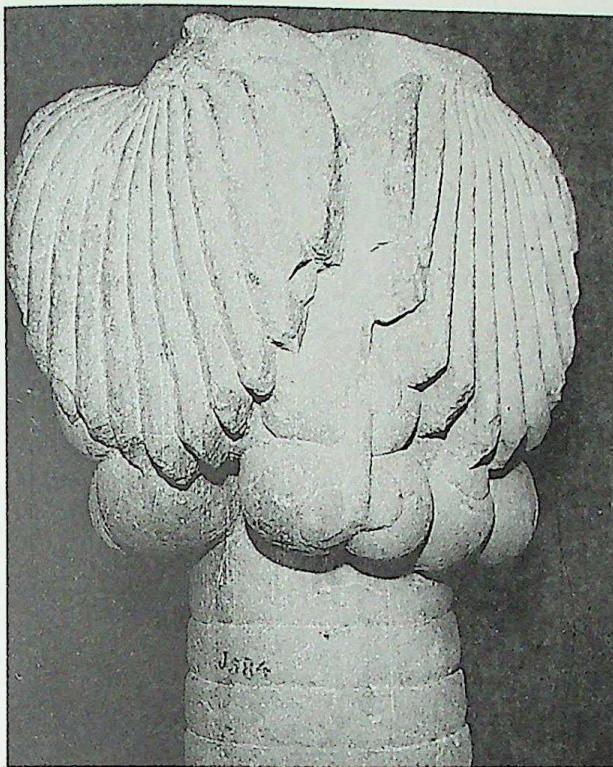


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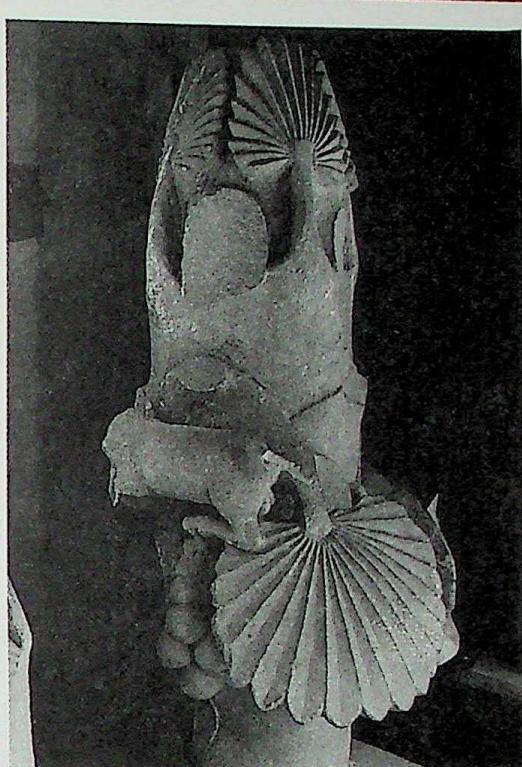


Plate No. 44

### BORASSUS FLABELLIFER Linn.

The Palmyra Palm is a tall unbranched palm with near circular fan-shaped leaves forming a crown at the top of the columnar trunk. The round fruits which arise in bunches are large, slightly globular and yellowish. The tree trunk has horizontal markings. It grows wild in Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and occasionally in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal.

The *Tala* tree, as it is commonly known, is depicted on temples in various ways. As a purely decorative panel forming a part of the forest flora or as a part of the scene as seen in Bharhut and Sanchi sculptures; as *Taladhvaja*, raised in honour of Balarama, also known as Sankarashana; depiction of the legend, killing of Dhenukasura by Balarama; *Saptatala* frieze after the legend mentioned in the *Ramayana*; depiction of an amorous scene under the *Tala* tree; extraction of toddy, an intoxicating drink.

Sculptures of *Taladhvaja* Capitals were found in Tumain in Madhya Pradesh. According to a legend, demon Dhenuka lived in a forest of *Tala* trees and harassed the inhabitants of the surrounding area but his main targets were Krishna and Balarama. Getting tired of his harassment, Balarama, the elder brother of Krishna, entered *Talavana*, the forest of *Tala* trees and to incite the demon to come out into the open, shook the trees. *Tala* fruits fell in abundance making a noise which attracted the attention of Dhenuka who in the form of a donkey, charged at the two brothers. Balarama killed him and threw his carcass on top of the *Tala* trees.<sup>39</sup> The most graphic depiction of this legend is from Pawaya in Madhya Pradesh (pls.43,44). The *Tala* tree with its large, fan-shaped leaves and globular fruits is clearly visible. The dead body of the donkey thrown on the tree top is also clear even though it has been mutilated. Another good depiction of this legend is from Vidisa, Madhya Pradesh (pl.45).

J.N. Banerjea comments on the discovery of this sculpture of the *Taladhvaja*, "Capital of a stone column shaped like the leafy top of a palmyra tree which was discovered at Pawaya (the side of ancient Padmavati, the Capital of Nagas) near Gwalior by Garde. It may be noted here that Besnagar-Vidisa was not very far from the

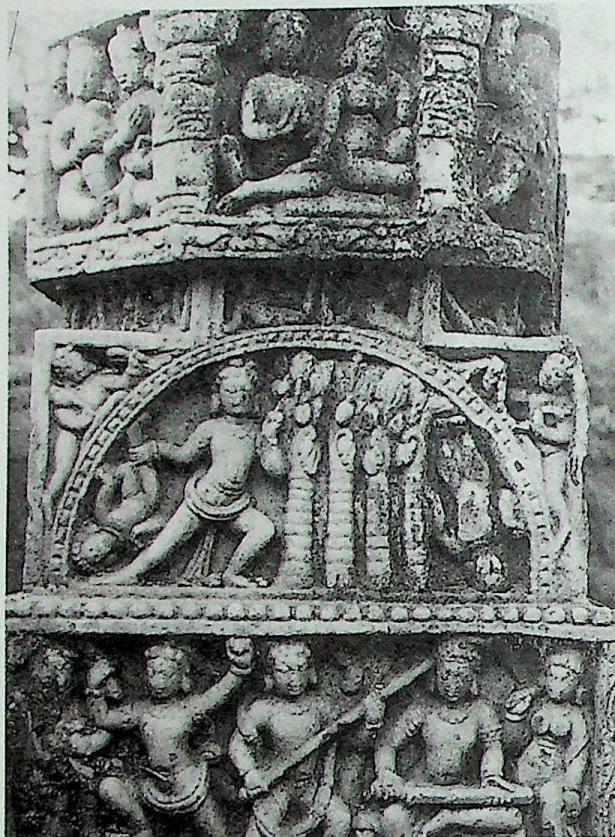


Plate No. 45

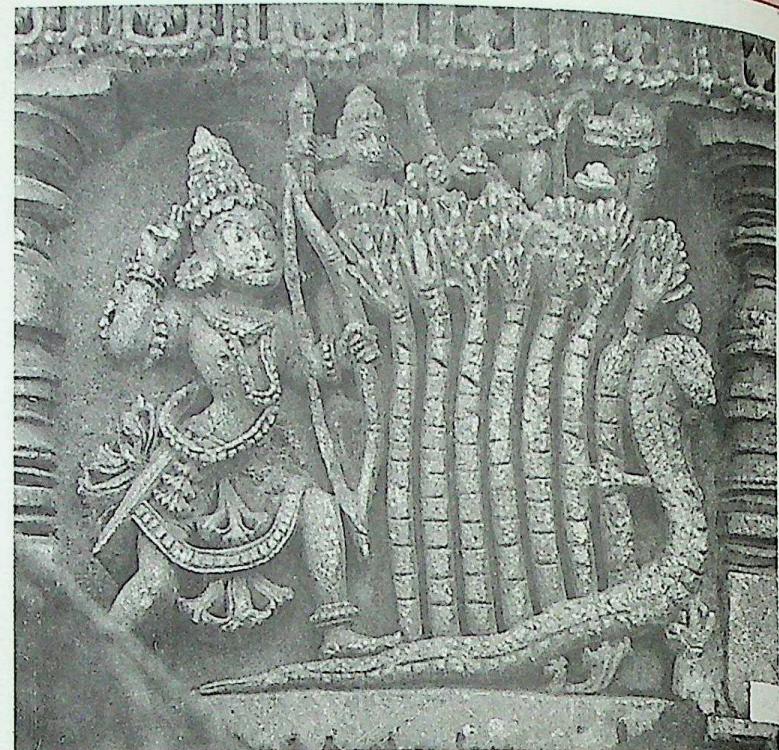


Plate No. 46

place. . . "the figure of a donkey carved in high relief on the Capital shows that the mythology about the killing of the ass-demon (Dhenukasura) by Samkarshana (Balarama) had already been developed."<sup>40</sup>

*Tala* tree as the *dhvaja* of Balarama was obviously most appropriate because of the association of the ever inebriate Samkarshana. In the *Mahabharata*, Samkarshana is described as *Ksiva* i.e., drunk. Fermented juice of palm tree is intoxicating. *Tala* trees grow wild in most parts of south and central India. The *Tala* *dhvaja* columns were mostly discovered in Madhya Pradesh. It is, however, interesting to note that the legend *Dhenuka vadha*, the killing of Dhenuka must have had its locale in Vrindavana or its surroundings near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh where Krishna and Balarama spent their childhood. Earlier perhaps, *Tala* trees had grown wild there but at present only an odd *Tala* tree is visible. It can only be explained in two ways, either there was ruthless destruction and felling of the trees or else the changing environment is responsible for its disappearance from that region.

*Tala* tree is mentioned many times in Valmiki's *Ramayana*. It appears from this text that the *Tala* tree grew commonly in the forests and wastelands. Ramachandra described Panchavati to Lakshmana where Rama took up his abode while in exile and among the various trees he mentioned are the *Tala* trees.<sup>41</sup>

When Ravana, the evil king of Lanka went to abduct Sita, he directed Maricha to Rama's hermitage and told him, 'Here is Rama's hermitage shaded by the Palm trees. Now accomplish the purpose for which we have come here.'<sup>42</sup> *Tala* tree has been translated in this text as Palm tree.

After Sita had been abducted by Ravana, Rama searching for her, approached a *Tala* tree and asked him about Sita's whereabouts. 'Oh *Tala* tree,' he said, 'have pity on me and if thou has seen that fair damsel, whose breasts resemble thy ripe fruit, do thou tell me.'<sup>43</sup>

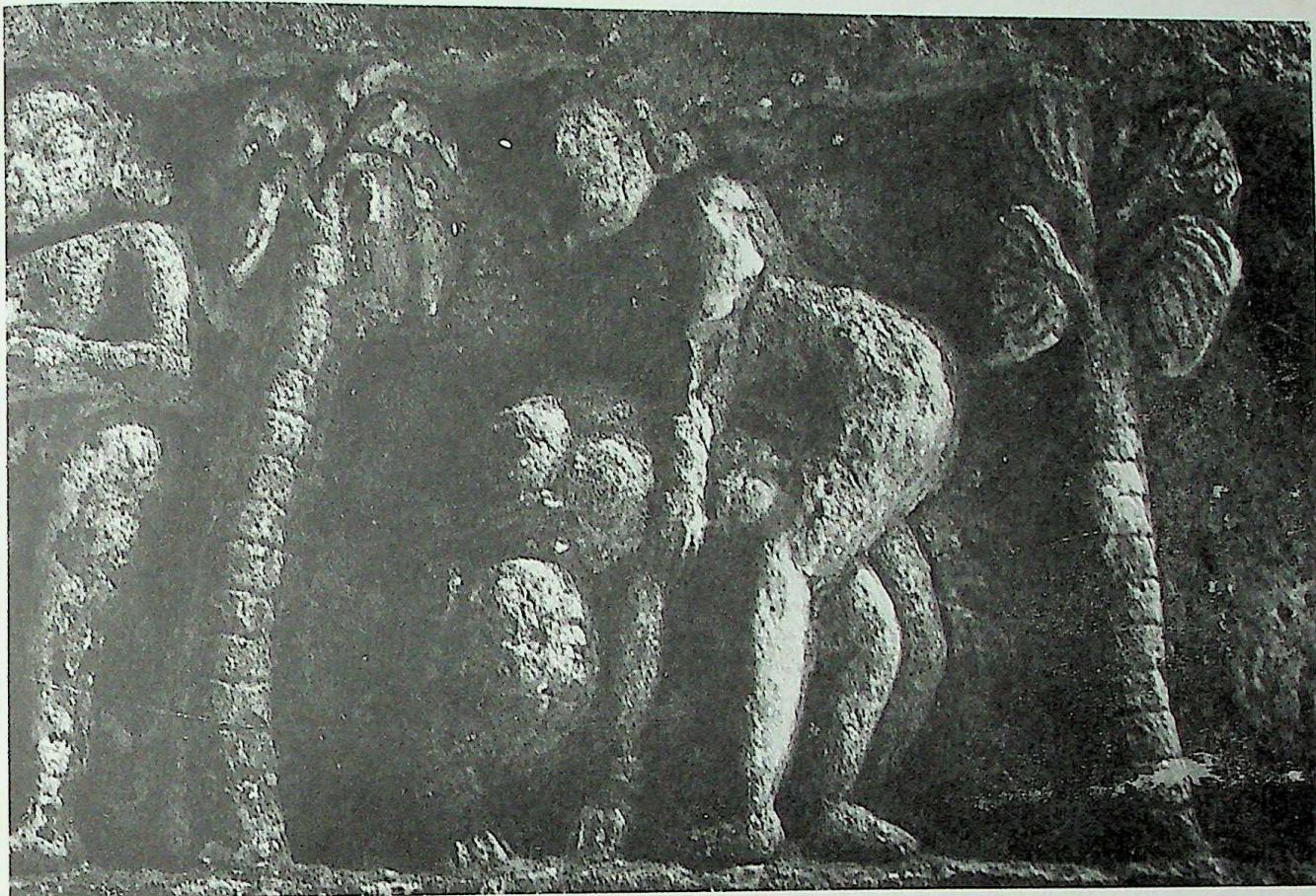


Plate No. 47

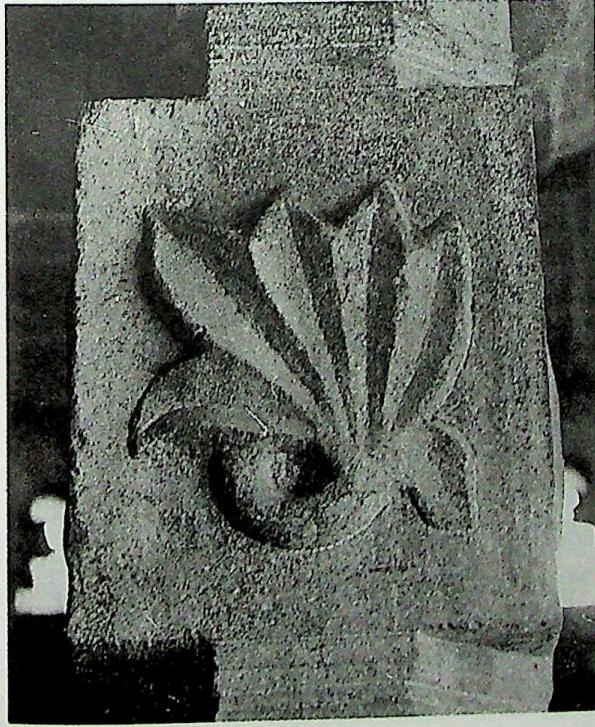


Plate No. 48

Another popular legend from the *Ramayana* associated with the *Tala* tree is a *Saptatala* legend showing seven trees of the *Tala* standing in a row. During their search for Sita, Ramachandra and Lakshmana reached the Kishkindha mountains where they met Hanuman and Sugriva. Sugriva's elder brother Bali had usurped the kingdom of Sugriva and had also forcibly kept his wife. Sugriva offered to help Rama along with his army in the search for Sita, provided Rama helped him first to regain his wife and kingdom. Ramachandra agreed to the condition but Sugriva had doubts about Rama's strength as he considered his brother Bali very powerful. Rama understood Sugriva's doubts about his strength, and to give him confidence shot an arrow at seven trees of *Sala* or *Tala* standing in a row. The arrow pierced through the seven trees, entered the nether regions and came back into Rama's quiver. At this miraculous feat, Sugriva was convinced that Rama was strong enough to vanquish his brother.<sup>44</sup> The legend is sculpted on *vaishnava* temples. Mostly the motif is highly stylised as in Mallikarjuna temple, Vithal temple and Hazararama temple,

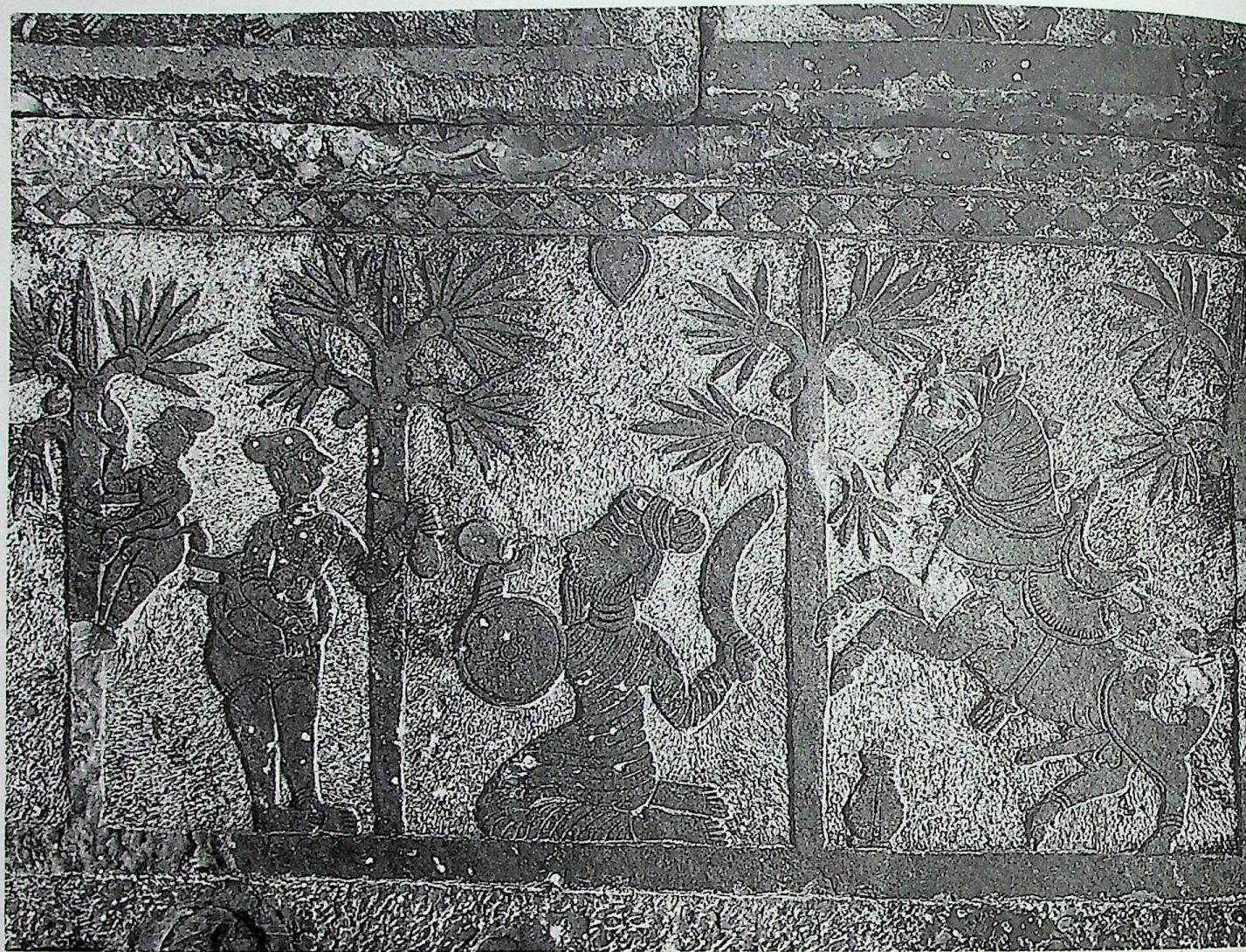


Plate No. 49

Hampi, all in Karnataka and Varadarajaswami temple in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. In Amriteshvara temple, Amritapura, Karnataka this legend is sculpted and the tree motif is only partly stylised (pl.46). In all the *saptatala* sculptures, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Hanuman are seen witnessing the feat.

In Valmiki *Ramayana* the tree mentioned is the *Sala* tree but not only the legend is called the *Saptatala* legend, the trees sculpted are also the *Tala* trees. Very likely the tree mentioned in the *Saptatala* legend would have been the *Tala* tree as it has a straight unbranched, columnar trunk crowned with leaves. It is easier to shoot an arrow through seven tree trunks of the *Tala* tree than through that of the *Sala* tree which has spreading branches. According to *Agni Purana*, the trees shot by Rama were the *Tala* trees. *Vishnu Purana* mentions a verse in the *Hanuman Nataka* which describes Rama piercing seven Palm trees with an arrow.<sup>45</sup>

The *Saptatala* legend is more symbolic than factual. The word *Tala* not only denotes a tree but also means rhythm, while its variant spelling signifies the various worlds mentioned in Hindu mythology. Number seven has a magical connotation. The seven regions meant perhaps are: *atala*, *rasatala*, *nitala*, *sutala*, *bhutala*, *vitala*, *patala* symbolically the seven worlds of Hindu mythology. The view is substantiated by the presence of a serpent sculpted under the seven *Tala* trees and serpents live under the earth.



Plate No. 50

A panel from Deobaloda in Raipur, Madhya Pradesh shows an amorous couple between two *Tala* trees (pl.47). The presence of the *Tala* trees flanking the couple is significant as from the *Tala* tree, toddy is extracted which when fermented becomes an intoxicant. The only purely decorative depiction, a pillar decoration is from the Jambukeshvara temple where a single leaf of *Tala* is sculpted (pl.48). *Tala* tree is also sculpted on some panels of Sanchi *Stupas*.

At the Virabhadraswami temple, Macherla, Andhra Pradesh, two *Tala* trees are sculpted. On the left a woman is climbing the tree to extract toddy in very much the same way as it is done at present. Next to her under another *Tala* tree, a woman is offering the toddy wine from a pot to a warrior. The fan-shaped leaves, the columnar tree trunk with horizontal markings are unmistakable, even though slightly stylised (pl.49).

A very natural depiction comes from Bharhut (pl.50), showing two trees of *Tala* growing side by side in front of a building and two people are looking out of the window above. The columnar tree trunk with horizontal markings and fan-shaped leaves and bunches of globular fruits at the top are clear.



Calotropis gigantea

### CALOTROPIS GIGANTEA R.Br.ex Ait.

*Arka* is a large, hairy, erect shrub which sometimes attains tree-like dimensions and grows wild on vacant plots. It has whitish-purple coloured flowers with spreading corollas arranged in umbellate cymes. The follicles, i.e., the fruits are in pairs, shaped like mangoes and filled with a loose, silky, fibrous floss.

In spite of the vast mythology associated with the *Arka* plant, it is with one exception mainly depicted on temples of Tamil Nadu and that too in the *shaiva* temples which latter point is understandable as the plant is associated with Shiva and Parvati and there are a large number of *shaiva* temples there. Since Hanuman is considered as a part incarnation of Shiva, garlands made of the *Arka* flowers are offered to him, particularly in Gujarat.

According to a legend, Andhakasura, so named as he was blind, was given in adoption to the childless *asura* Hiranyaksha by Shiva with a condition that if Andhakasura ever coveted Parvati, the Mother of the Universe, Shiva himself would kill him, the only ground on which he could be killed. Andhaka was blind not only physically but also with lust and arrogance. He decided to seduce Parvati. To escape Andhaka, Parvati rushed into a cave with Andhaka in pursuit of her. Seeing him pursuing her, Parvati got frightened and invoked the gods and they rushed to help her. A fierce battle was fought between Shiva and Andhaka and the *asura* army was routed. Andhaka decided on a ruse. He assumed the form of Shiva and asked his General Sunda to take the form of Nandin and together they approached Parvati. Parvati realised the ruse in time and before Andhaka could catch her, she vanished into a white *Arka* flower. After a fierce battle Shiva pierced Andhaka with his trident and impaled him on it.<sup>46</sup>

A slight variation of the story is found in the *Vamana Purana* where it says that Sunda assumed the form of Shiva and approached Parvati. Parvati detected the fraud and slipped away. Andhakasura pursued her and she took shelter in a forest and entered the white flower of *Arka*. Seeing Parvati disappear, Andhaka along with Sunda and his army came back. A fierce battle between the *asuras* and the *devatas* took place and the forces of evil, symbolised by the *asuras* were defeated and the forces of goodness, symbolised by the *devatas*, won.<sup>47</sup>

According to a South Indian legend, Goddess Parvati came to earth in the form of a cow. Her companions, the minor deities, also accompanied her in the form of cows, while the *devatas* and celestial beings followed her as cowherds. Shiva followed her in the guise of a bull. The cow Parvati discovered a *lingam* in a forest of *aruci* (*Arka*) trees, and poured her milk over it and thus got the name *Oppilamulaiyal*, meaning one with incomparable breasts. Afterwards, the cow Parvati poured her milk over a *lingam* present in a nearby Banyan forest.<sup>48</sup>

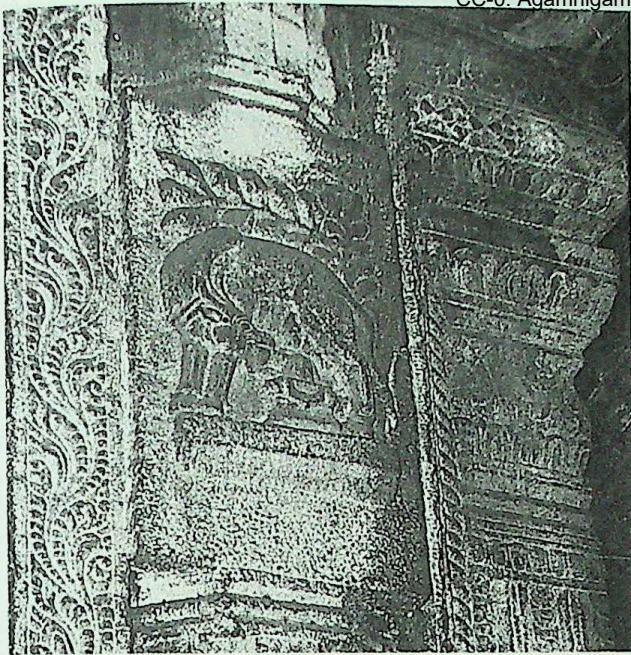


Plate No. 51



Plate No. 52



Plate No. 53

The legend of Parvati as a cow pouring her milk on a *lingam* present under the *Arka* plant is commonly sculpted on *shaiva* temples (pl.51). Some of the temples where this scene is sculpted are the Meenakshi temple, Madura and Nataraja temple, Chidambaram, both in Tamil Nadu, Virupaksha temple, Hampi in Karnataka, Ekalinga temple in Rajasthan et al.

Kramrisch writes about the significance of this legend, "Parvati, taking refuge in the *arka* flower took refuge in Siva. Though the significance of the *arka* plant is not dwelt upon in the *Puranas*, it was ancient knowledge that the *arka* tree stood for Rudras. It had sprung from Rudra's resting place (S.B.9.1.1.9) and was co-substantial with him. It sustained Rudra with its own life sap; it was the sacrificial food offered to Siva ritually in the *Satarudriya* sacrifice. When the God stood flaming on the altar longing for food, the gods gathered food for him. They offered wild sesamum to him by means of an *arka* leaf (S.B.9.1.1.8). The leaf on which the food was offered and the food was looked upon as one. They were the offerings for Agni/Rudra, to be consumed by him, and he revealed himself as Agni, the *Arka* (S.B.10.3.5)."<sup>49</sup>

Agrawala writes on the symbolism of the *Arka* plant, 'In the *Rigveda* itself we find mention of the *arka* symbolism, which is said to be measured not in material manifestation but by the *Pranic* energy of the *Gayatrena* chant (*Gayatrena prati mimte Arkam*, R.V.I.164.24) and that each *arka* or individual by the same inherent energy descending to him from the universal source, creates a *Mandala* for himself in which he had his being...'. '... *Arka* is identified with *Jatavedas Agni* i.e., the Fire in the body which is also compared to a *Gharma* or pot kept boiling at a certain temperature which is exactly the nature of human body...'<sup>50</sup>

Parvati as the female energy of Shiva had concealed herself in the *Arka* plant as the mother principle of individual life, incarnating in Matter, while her Lord was engaged in combat against the *asuric* forces symbolised as *Andhaka*.<sup>51</sup> Parvati, the female energy of Shiva is seen sitting under a tree of *Arka* (pl.52).

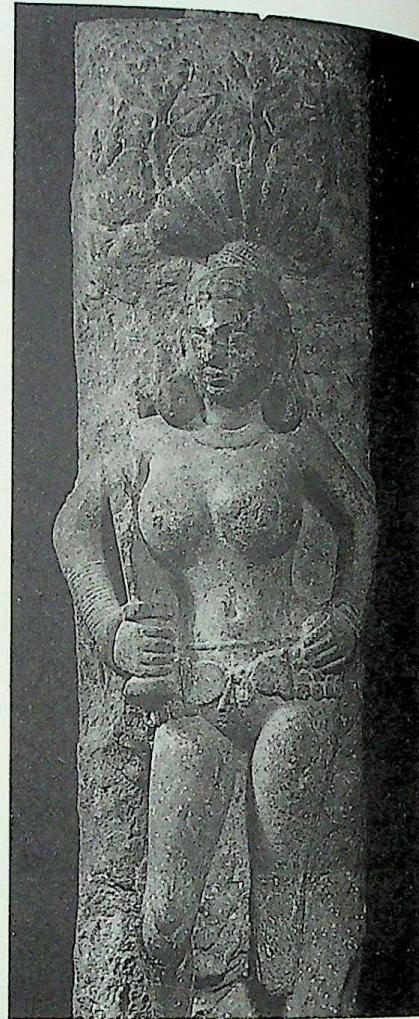
The importance of the *Arka* plant is mentioned in the *Siva Purana*, 'Worldly pleasures and salvation will be secured for worship with *Tulasi* (*Ocimum sanctum*). Great valour is secured by worshipping with the *Arka* or *Kubjakahara* flower...'<sup>52</sup>

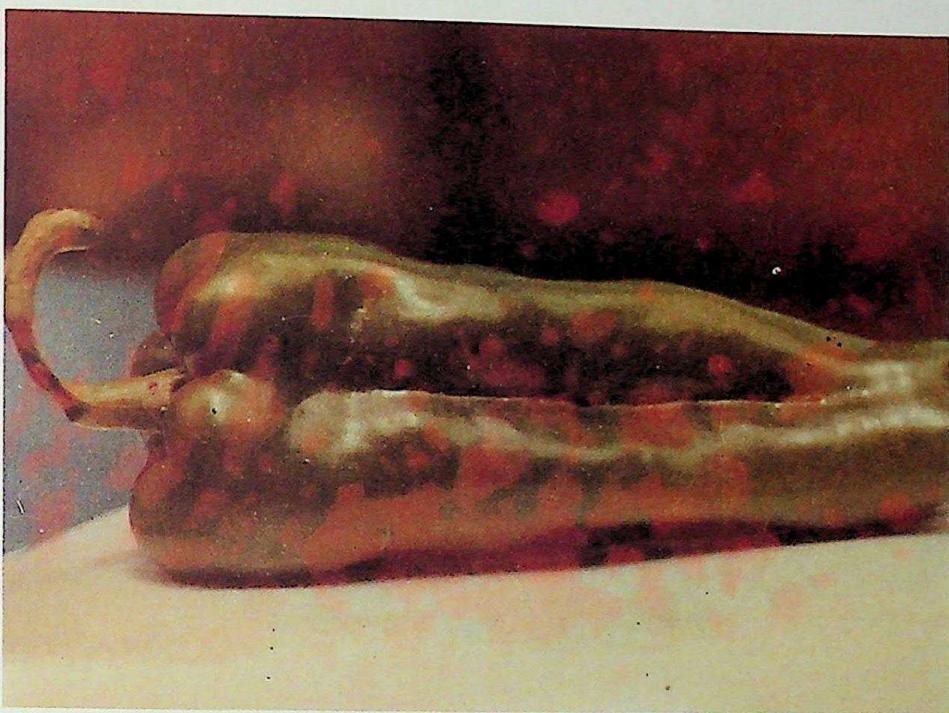
When Ganesha was crowned as the Chief of *ganas*, Shiva said, 'The idol (for worship) shall be made of metal, coral, white *Arka* flowers and clay.'<sup>53</sup>

Ayyar mentions in *South Indian Festivites*, 'A bath on this day (?) is taken over the leaves of the *Arka* Plant' *Arka*, in Sanskrit means the Sun.<sup>54</sup>

Jambukeshvara Shiva temple is the only temple where the author has seen the follicles, fruits of *Calotropis* depicted as pillar decoration (pl.53). The fruits have the shape of mangoes but instead of a sweet pulp, have floss in them. A sculpture of a woman with a sword standing guard under the *Arka* tree is from Mathura (pl.54). The leaves and the inflorescence of the plant sculpted is very true to nature. Mathura was earlier a *shaivite* stronghold and the depiction of the *Arka* plant, therefore, is justified. Near Mathura-Vrindavana on the banks of the river Yamuna, is a small town called Batesar which historically is a very ancient site known as Bhuteshwar, named after Shiva, the Lord of elements, i.e., *agni* (fire), *vayu* (wind), *akash* (ether), *jal* (water) and *prithvi* (earth). Long ago, a local prince is said to have built 101 temples dedicated to Shiva and Shiva worship is still prevalent in this township. Even though Mathura-Vrindavana region has a strong Krishna cult for a long time, earlier there was a Buddhist, Jain and a *Naga* cult. But the general belief is that this region at no time was a *shaivite* stronghold. But the presence of a very ancient temple town of Batesar with a large number of small and big Shiva temples belie this view. A 2nd cent A.D. depiction of the *Arka* plant motif is understandable.

A large number of plants were worshipped and, therefore, sculpted on temples from circa 1st century B.C. to 2nd century A.D., *Arka* plant was also included among them. This plant grows commonly on vacant plots, fields etc., and being a plant of great medicinal value was selected for such depiction and made sacred. A woman with a sword standing on guard is a fairly common depiction during the Kushan period.





Capsicum annuum

### CAPSICUM ANNUUM Linn.

Mexico and some other countries of Latin America are the original home of all peppers where the fossil records show that they were in use as early as 7000 B.C. Heiser mentions that P. Bernabe Cabo who had visited many parts of Spanish America during his fifty years of travel in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has written that *aji* (pepper) . . . was so highly regarded that the Indian ate it with everything, and even by itself when green. During the fast that they made to worship their gods, they abstained from eating anything cooked with pepper.<sup>55</sup>

Pepper must have been held in very great esteem in Latin America if they were considered important enough to be vowed to be given up. In India till the present day, food items relished by an individual are given up on the completion of a vow.

Heiser writes, 'Peppers as well as many other plants from the New World, reached South-eastern Asia a few years after the discovery of America, and today, peppers are almost as important in tropical Asia as they are in tropical America. In fact, peppers of the genus *Capsicum* became so well established in India within a short time to be indigenous. In India they are used in the preparation of curry powder and are considered an essential part of many dishes. Peppers are also widely used throughout Africa . . .'<sup>56</sup>

It is mentioned in *Siva Purana* that by making gifts of *Haritaki* (one of the myrobalams), chillies (*Capsicum*), cloth, milk, etc., and by installing Brahman, the alleviation of consumption is brought about.<sup>57</sup>



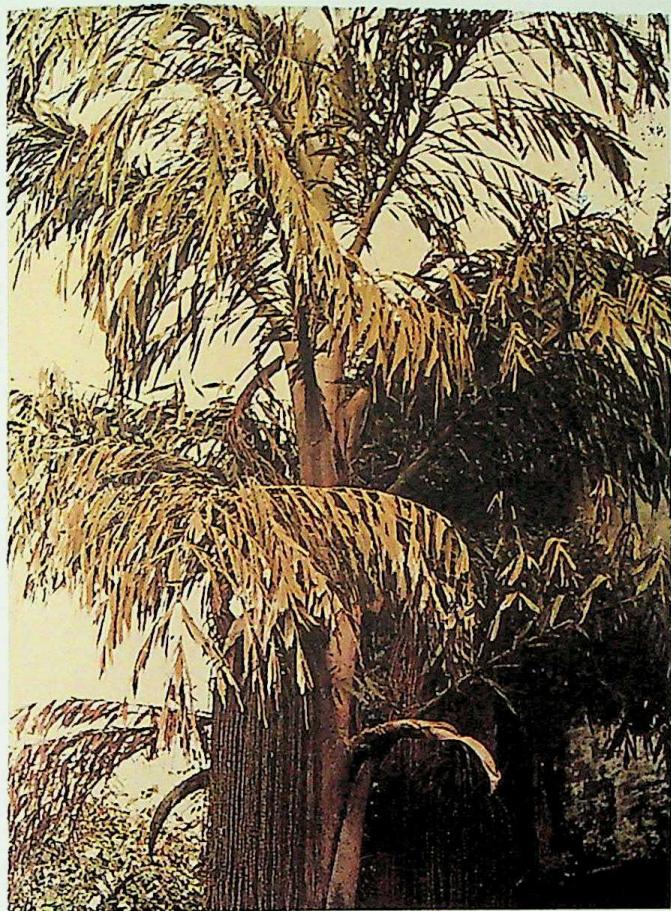
Plate No. 55



Plate No. 56

According to Randhawa, chillies are indigenous to Brazil and Peru and were introduced into India by the Portuguese in the 16th century A.D.<sup>58</sup> This obviously is not true. Chillies have been grown and used in India much earlier as chillies are mentioned in *Siva* and *Vamana Puranas*, which are dated circa 6th-8th century A.D.

In spite of the importance of chillies given in the *Siva Purana*, it is not widely sculpted and the author has seen them depicted only at the Jambukeshvara Shiva temple, Tiruchirapalli. In all panels showing *Capsicum*, the flowers and leaves are true to nature (pls.55, 56), and not only fully developed fruits but also the different stages in their development are sculpted. In plate 55, the only discrepancy is regarding the large size of the plant motif showing a *rishi* sitting under it. The *Capsicum* plant is usually not more than 70-80 cms. in height.



Caryota urens. linn.

### CARYOTA URENS Linn.

Horse-tailed or fish-tailed Palm has a tall, unbranched columnar stem topped by a dense tuft of large, irregularly bi-pinnate dull-green leaves, the pinnae being fan-shaped. Flowers appear in spikes from leaf axils and hang down in large clusters, which has given the name, Horse-tail Palm to the tree. Since elephants feed on the young fruits of the Palm, it is also called Elephant Palm.

The solitary depiction of the Horse-tail palm that the author has come across is from the Meenakshi temple complex, Madura. This pillar decoration in one of the Halls of the temple complex shows an elephant along with the Palm with his trunk reaching out to the hanging fruits of the palm. Since there are no legends attached to the palm and it has no religious significance either, the sculpture of the palm is purely decorative. The entire panel is badly white-washed and, therefore, difficult to photograph.

### CASSIA FISTULA Linn.

*Amaltas*, Sanskrit name is *Svarnavriksha*, a medium-sized highly ornamental tree with bright yellow flowers in axillary pendulous lax raceme, grows in deciduous forests. The tree starts flowering before it puts out the leaves. Flowers appear from April to July and fruits in October.

It is a tree of great economic importance but is sparingly sculpted on temples. The best depiction is from Aihole (pl.57) showing a Jain deity flanked by two women standing under the *Amaltas* tree. There are two human figures on the tree, very likely *vanadevatas* or *yakshas*. Though the large pinnate leaves of *Amaltas* are clear, the pendulous receme, the inflorescence, which would be difficult to sculpt, are not so clear.

A highly stylised sculpture of the pendulous inflorescence of *Amaltas* is from Bharhut (pl.58). Two women are holding the inflorescence. The woman on the right also holds a bunch of flowers in her left hand. No leaves are present which is understandable as the tree starts flowering when there are no leaves. The only discrepancy in the depiction is that some of the recemes are turned upwards which could be due to the fancy of the sculptor. The inflorescence sculpted in a highly stylised form gives the impression of a cone. This is to be compared with the globular bunch of flowers or fruits of *kadamba* where the floral heads are shown with criss-cross lines as it is not possible to show the individual flowers in the bunch. The same technique appears to have been used in sculpting the pendulous inflorescence of *Amaltas*.

*Amaltas* grows widely in the deciduous forests of Madhya Pradesh where the stupa of Bharhut was located.



Cassia fistula Linn.

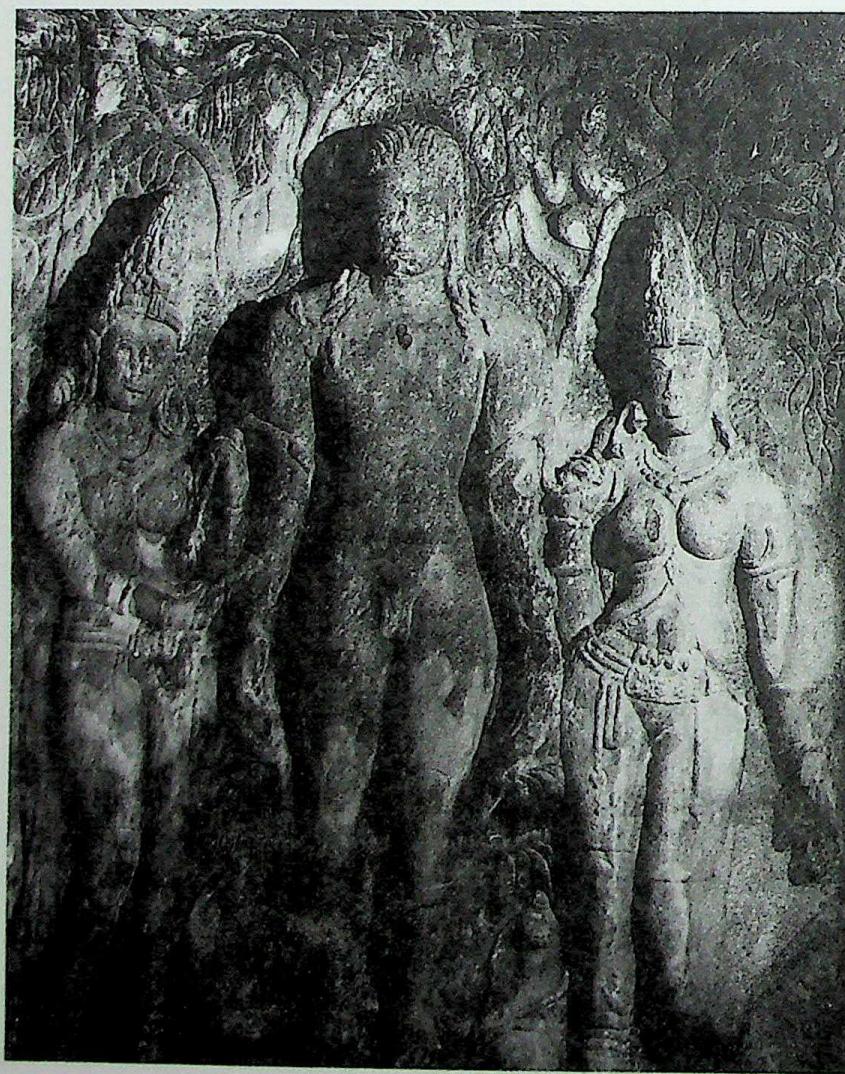


Plate No. 57

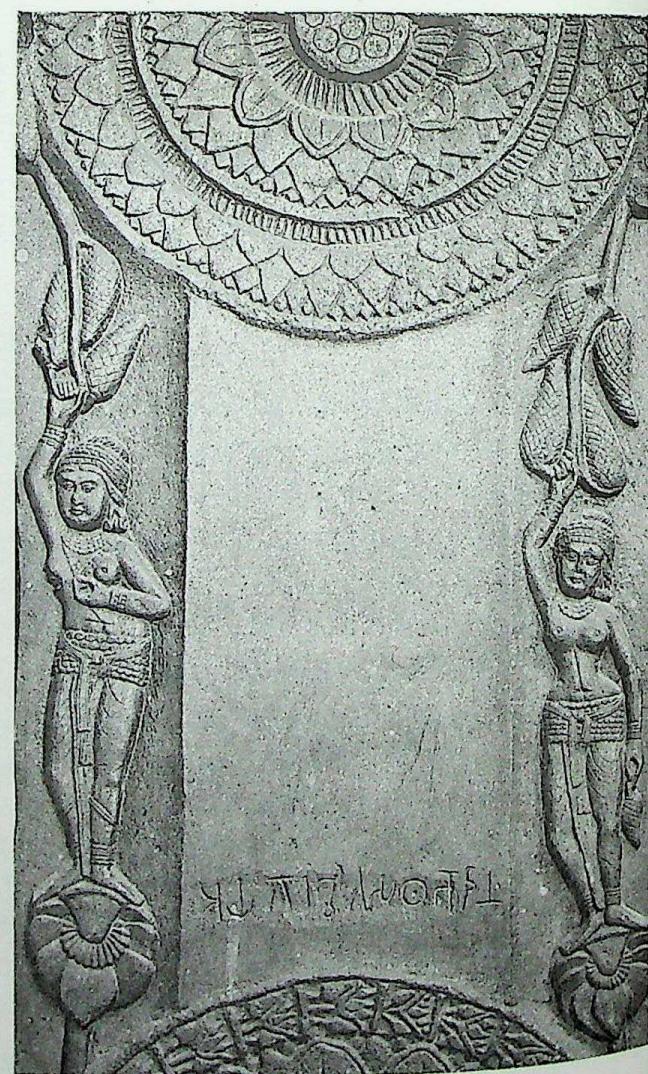


Plate No. 58

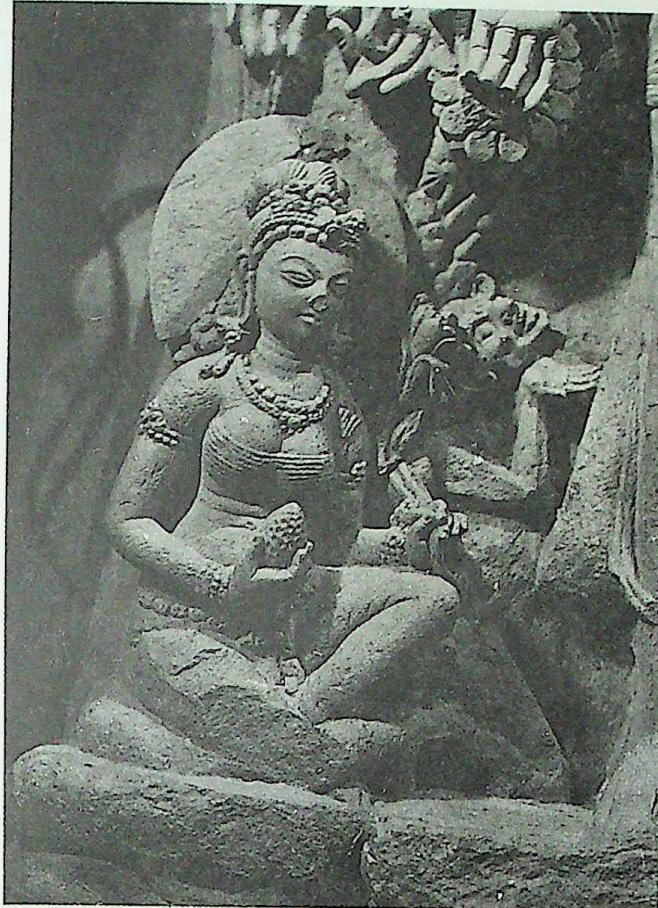


Plate No. 59

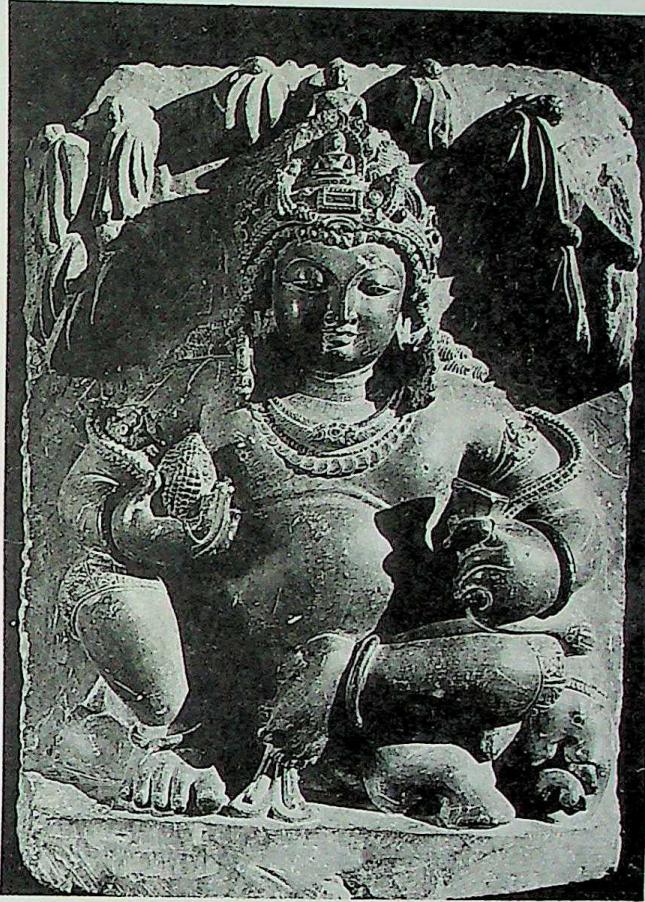


Plate No. 60

### CITRUS LIMON (Linn.) Burm of LEMON CITRUS MEDICA var. Limonum of Watt. CITRON

Both the varieties of Citrus mentioned above are very similar (pls.59,60). Also the difference in the utility of the fruits is very little. Both fruits are exceedingly sour. They are used mainly for making pickles and candies. Peels are made into marmalades and other preserves. From the variety *Citron*, citrus oil, also known as oil of Cedrat is obtained from fresh rinds.

There is a mention of *Bijapura*, *Citron* (*Citrus medica*) in Monier-William's Sanskrit-English dictionary (p.732). The fruit is also mentioned as full of seeds and juice of the *citron* fruit. There is a mention of *Bijapura* in volumes II and III of H.P. Shastri's translation of *Valmiki's Ramayana*. In volume I, *Bala Kanda* and *Ayodhya Kanda*, the glossary lists it as *Vijaka*, the *Citron* tree. *Bijora* and *Bijapura* are mostly shown in the hands of gods and goddesses. From the photograph of the sculpted fruit, it is difficult to say which of the two fruits is *Bijora* and which is *Bijapura*. It is mostly shown in the hands of the Jain deities.



Cocos nucifera Linn.

### COCOS NUCIFERA Linn.

Coconut palm has an unbranched tree trunk with large, pinnate leaves commonly found growing on the sea coast and also cultivated in the interior in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, and in Andhra Pradesh. It came from Malaysia and has been propagated on the east coast of India from the middle of the first century B.C.

Coconut fruit is considered highly auspicious and offered to various deities and on auspicious occasions to guests. Symbolically the coconut fruit is considered as Shiva's head. The three black, round scars on the shell (endocarp) as his three eyes and the fibrous mesocarp as the matted hair of Shiva, the ascetic.

A coconut fruit along with leaves of the mango tree is put on the mouth of a *kalasa* or a water-pot which then is called a *Purna-kumbha* or a *Purna-ghata*, the vase of plenty (pls.61,62). This pot is symbolically invoked as gods and goddesses for the success of any mission undertaken. The coconut is adorned with sandal paste, vermillion and flowers.<sup>59</sup> A very large number of south Indian temples have the *Purna-kumbha* motif on their walls. A few well-known sculptures of it are on the Nataraja temple, Chidambaram; Meenakshi temple, Madura; Nagesvaram temple, Kumbakonam, all in Tamil Nadu, as well as on the *shikhars* of the Khajuraho temples in Madhya Pradesh.

According to a mythological story, Rishi Vishwamitra created the coconut palm. Vishwamitra practised severe penances and acquired super-human powers to demonstrate which, he sent the exiled king Satyavrata to heaven in his mortal body. Satyavrata had been exiled from his kingdom by his father, for having seduced the wife of a citizen. There was a twelve year severe famine in the country while Vishwamitra was away and

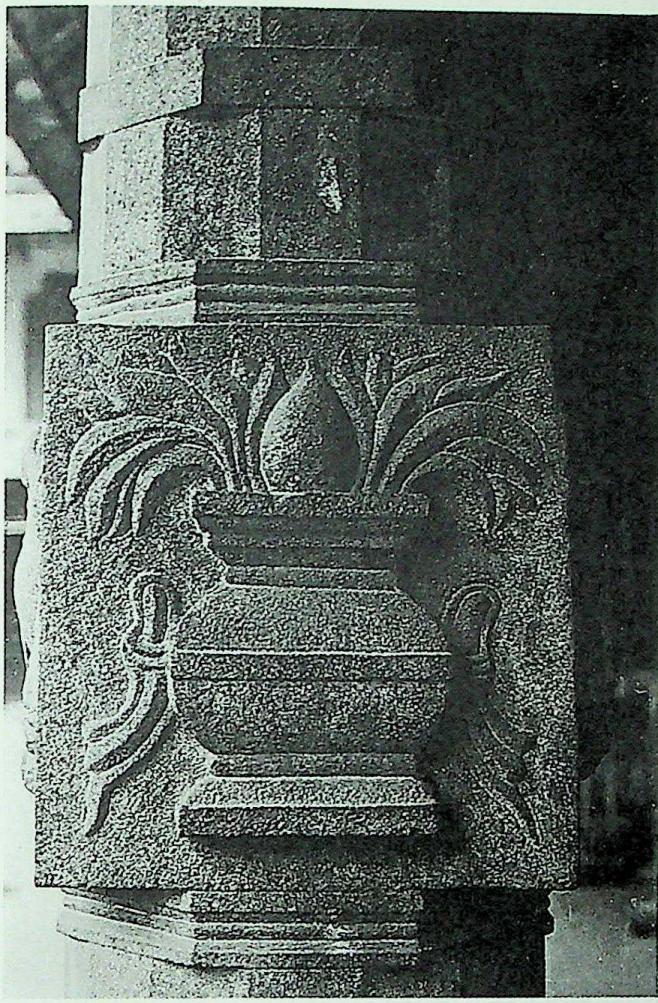


Plate No. 61



Plate No. 62

Satyavrata looked after his wife and children during his period of exile. He killed the cow of *rishi* Vasishtha, and provided them the flesh of deer, suspending it upon a spreading fig tree on the banks of the river Ganga so that they were not subjected to the indignity of receiving food from an outcaste. Since Satyavrata desired to reach heaven in his mortal body, Vishwamitra repaid him by fulfilling his desire. But there was a strong opposition from the sages and gods. 'How can a mortal reside in my domain,' said Indra. The king of the celestials, 'only souls are permitted.' Feeling annoyed at Vishwamitra's audacity, Indra hurled Satyavrata out of the heavens. Vishwamitra was enraged at this. For Satyavrata to come back to earth meant not only an insult to him but also an acceptance of defeat from Indra. With his magical powers, Vishwamitra stopped Satyavrata from falling to earth, and he remained suspended in air. To prop him up, Vishwamitra put a pole under him and in course of time, it became the coconut palm which is straight and unbranched like the pole that Vishwamitra had used to prevent Satyavrata from falling to earth. Since Satyavrata was suspended between space and earth, he got the epithet, *Trishanku*, one who is neither here nor there.<sup>60</sup> Also for committing three sins i.e., displeasing his father, killing a cow and eating flesh not previously consecrated. In plate 63 is seen Vishwamitra after having created the coconut palm. The two trees with their columnar tree trunk, large pinnate leaves and globular fruits are clearly depicted.

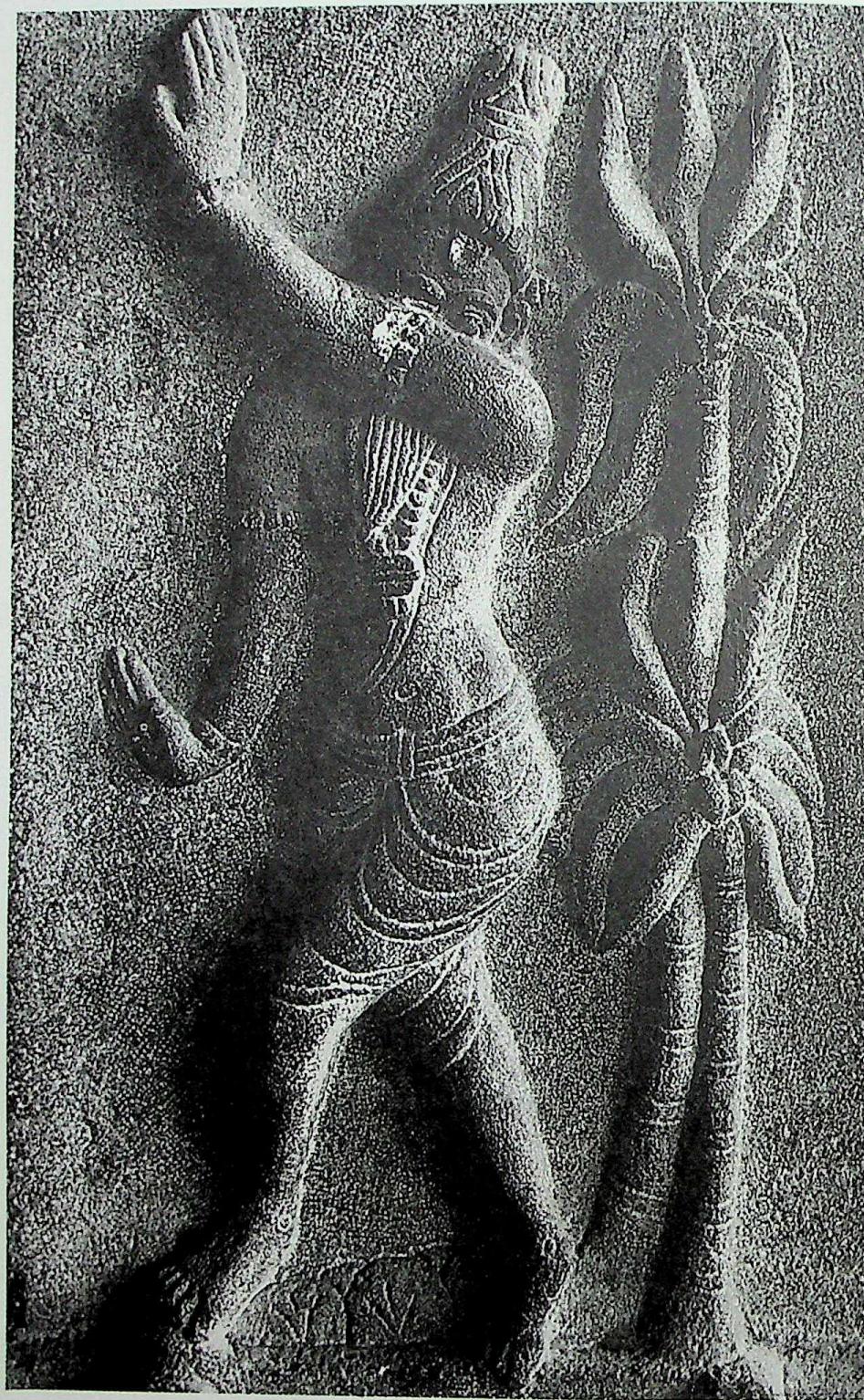


Plate No. 63

Coconut fruit is given as *dakshina* after a religious ceremony. In *Matsya Purana* it is written that at the end of a *vrata* to propitiate Shiva, a devotee, depending on his means should give a coconut fruit made in gold or silver to a *Brahman* who has a large family.<sup>61</sup>

At the end of a *puja*, a coconut fruit should be placed with scents and flowers at the place of worship.<sup>62</sup> During *Shivaratri* rites, *Purna-kumbhas* wrapped in cloth with a coconut covering the mouth of the pot and the *dakshina* inside it are kept at the place of worship.<sup>63</sup>

Coconut palm does not grow in the north or in central India and as expected, except in Khajuraho temples and Sanchi *stupas* the author has not seen coconut motif on the temples of the north. In Madhya Pradesh, the



Plate No. 64

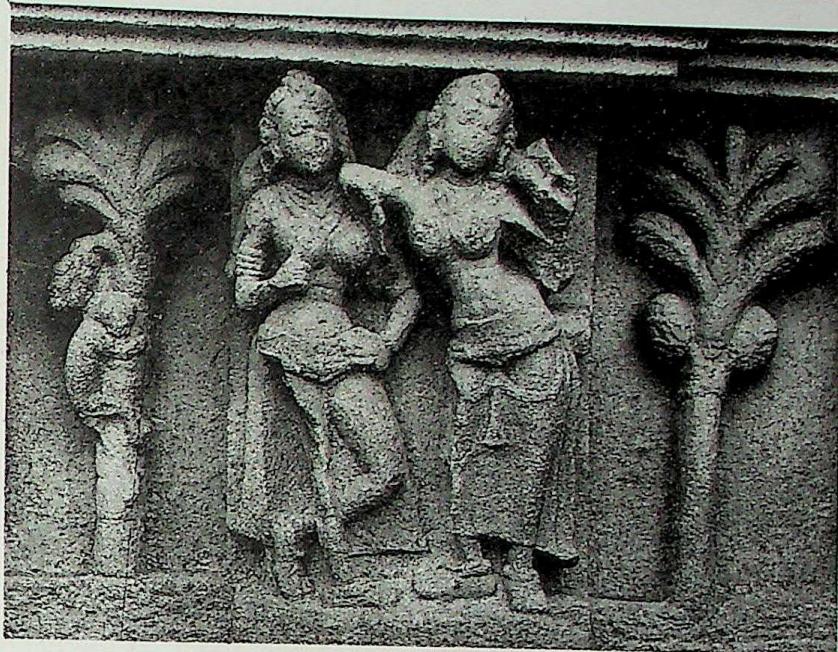


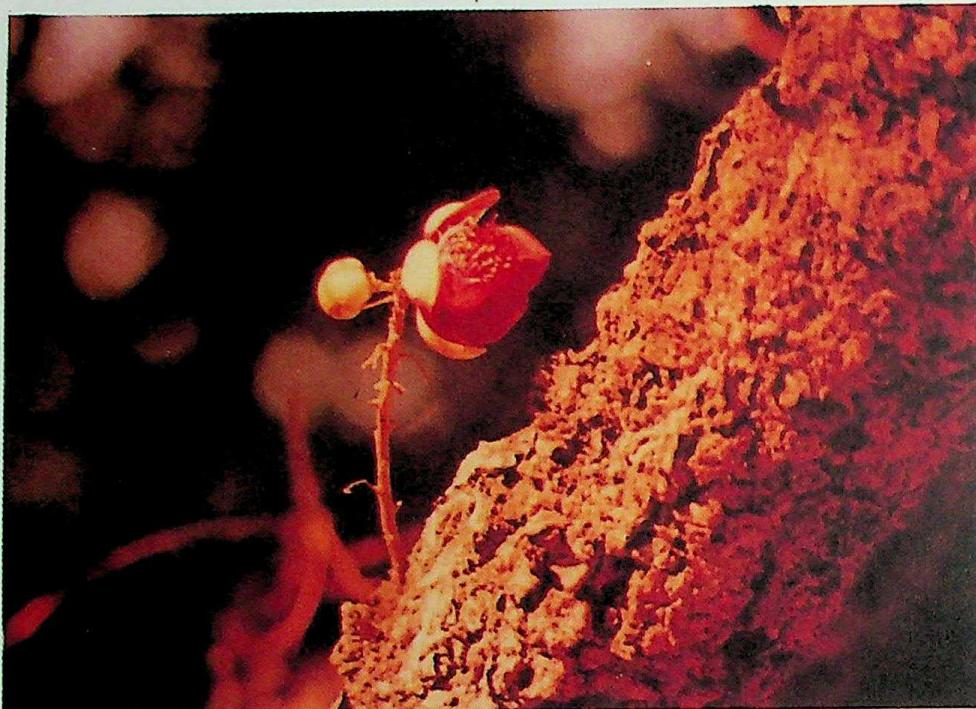
Plate No. 65

*Purna-ghatas (kumbhas)* have stalks of lotus placed in the mouth of a *kalash* as seen in Bharhut and Teli-ka-mandir, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. Lotus replacing the coconut is also seen in a *Purna-kalasa* from Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh.

Temple rituals being Brahmanical, they are more predominant in the temples of South India. The importance of the coconut palm is not only because of its economic value but also because of its relevance in religious rituals. One would have expected it to be extensively sculpted than it is. In plate 64 from the Meenakshi temple, Madura is a rare depiction of the entire tree along with the globular fruits, though a crude sculpture as pillar decoration. The Vishwa Brahma and the Vira Brahma temples in Alampur, Andhra Pradesh have good depictions of the coconut palm. In plate 65, two women are shown in a dance pose flanked by two trees of coconut on one of which a monkey is climbing.



Plate No. 66



Couroupita guianensis



Plate No. 67

## CONIFEROUS CONES

A very rare depiction of a floral motif showing cones of a coniferous tree, was found at Bharhut (pl.66). The panel is from a railing post fragment and only the cones attached to a branch are visible. The sculpture of the diamond-shaped apophysis of the ovuliferous scales of the pine cones when the scales are closed are very graphic. There is no epigraphical evidence which would provide the reason for their depiction and most likely it is a purely decorative floral motif.

## COUROUPITA GUIANENSIS Aubl.

*Naga lingam* is a large-sized tree, native of South America and West Indies but is cultivated in South India from very early times. The tree bears curiously formed flowers in clusters on the upper trunk and main limbs of the tree. Flowers have a tinge of white, yellow and pinkish-purple colour. The tree flowers in winter months and the fruits take 8-9 months to ripen. The stamens fuse to form a band-like structure which rises from the base of the ovary and bends over the central pistil. The pistil emerges through a circular hole over which the staminal band bends like the hood of a *naga*. The pistil looks like a miniature *lingam* (the roles reversed), thus giving the name *Naga-lingam* to the flower. For this reason the tree is cultivated in *shaiva* temples and its flowers offered in worship to the sacred *lingam*. Some of the temples where its flowers are offered are the Meenakshi temple, Madura; Nataraja temple, Chidambaram; Sri Nellaiyappar temple, Tirunelveli; Jambukesvara temple, Tiruchirapalli, all in Tamil Nadu and Virupaksha temple, Hampi in Karnataka.

Since the staminal band formed by the fused stamens bends over the pistil and completely encloses the pistil, which looks like the *lingam*, it is impossible to sculpt it realistically (pl.67), and one has to lift the staminal band to see the *linga*-like pistil.

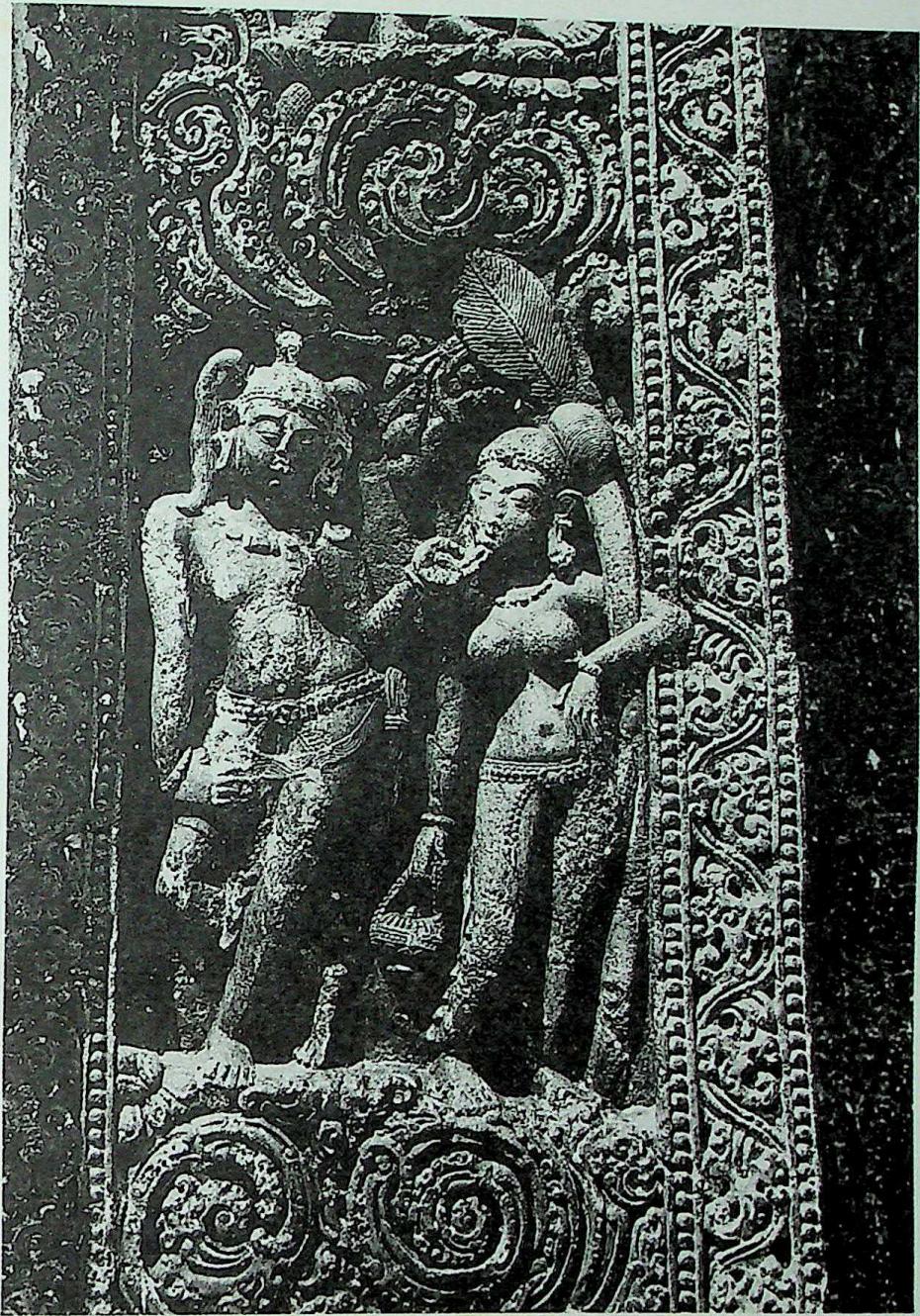


Plate No. 68

### CYCAD LIKE Leaf

In the Mukhalingam temple, Andhra Pradesh is the sculpture of an amorous couple. The woman is seen holding the trunk of a tree with a Cycad-like leaf growing on it. She is holding the tree trunk in an unusual manner, almost as if she was embracing it with one arm. Normally the Cycad tree trunk has an armour of old leaf bases which are prickly to touch. In this panel there is only one leaf present whereas in nature on a Cycad plant, a rosette of pinnate leaves are present crowning the tree trunk. The pinnate character of a Cycad leaf is very clear but a Cycad leaf does not have a long stalk as seen in this panel (pl.68). The woman is holding the leaf, the stalk of which is touching the ground.



Plate No. 69

### DALBERGIA SISOO Roxb.

*Shimshapa* is a large-sized deciduous tree with small yellowish-white flowers which appear from March to June and fruits from July to August. The tree is frequently planted for shade on road sides in villages as well as in towns. It is cultivated as a timber tree.

On either side of the cave entrance at Bhaja are two figures, one riding an elephant and the other a chariot drawn by horses. The one riding an elephant is Indra and the one riding a chariot, Surya. On the side of the two figures is a tree from which a large number of human figures appear to be floating down or hanging in the branches. The tree appears to be *Shimshapa*, a favourite tree for committing suicide. J.N. Banerjea writes 'Bhaja caves Surya riding a chariot and figures floating down. The Buddhist cave at Bhaja bears on the left side of its facade a royal figure who is shown riding in the company of two women in a chariot, its wheels pass over grossly proportioned nude demons seeming to float downwards in the air. Burgess identified the relief long ago as "Surya driving through the sky with his attendants and destroying the evil powers of darkness."<sup>64</sup>

Since the tree depicted on both sides of the facade of Bhaja caves is similar, the identification of the relief by Burgess, as that of Surya, the Sun-god is pertinent only to one panel, i.e., the Surya panel, particularly in connection with the remarks he made regarding Surya destroying the evil powers of darkness. But it does not justify the panel showing Indra. Therefore, very likely the figures are of people having committed suicide, or the bodies of war victims hung on trees as earlier Indra was the Lord of war (pl.69).

Though the number of leaflets in a pinnate leaf of *Shimshapa* vary from 2,3 to 5, the tree viewed from a distance gives the impression of having more leaflets, and that is the impression one gets in the depiction of the tree in the relief from Bhaja caves.



Plate No. 70

### DURIO ZIBETHINUS Linn.

Durian, a large evergreen tree, bears oblong, acuminate leaves densely covered with golden hair on the under surface. Flowers are large, whitish, in lateral cymes or fascicles; fruits are ovoid or sub-globose, 6-10 inches long and covered with a spiny, woody coat as in the Jackfruit. Tree flowers in March-April and fruits ripen in July-September.

A very unusual depiction of Durian as a floral motif is on the *Kalpalata* (*Kalpavalli*), the wish-fulfilling creeper from Bharhut (pl.70). The floral depiction shows clearly the globular fruits with a spiny coat. The *Kalpalata* also depicts Jackfruits and a *Jataka* scene showing villagers playing a dice game of *chopar* with two men looking on. Such village scenes are familiar in India till the present times.

### ELAEOCARPUS SPHAERICUS (Gaertn.) K.Schum.

According to *Skanda Purana*, *Rudraksha* tree originated from the tears of Rudra. Rudra is a *Vedic* name of Shiva.<sup>65</sup>

When *asura* Taraka was killed by Skanda, the son of Shiva, the three sons of Taraka performed severe austerities with their minds solely dedicated to Brahma. Satisfied by their penance, Brahma offered them a boon. The *asuras* asked for indestructibility and said, 'Protect us from our enemies. Let not old age, sickness or death befall us. Of what avail is wealth, or vast dominions, various forms of enjoyment, position and power if death is the ultimate end. It is futile to live if one is to die at the end. Give us each a strong city so that we become invulnerable.'

Brahma agreed to their request but with reservations and said that they would be destroyed when their virtue failed. But added that their three cities, i.e., the golden city of Tarakaksha built in the heavens, silver one built by Kamalaksha in the sky, and Vidyunmali's city made of copper on earth would be destroyed by one arrow shot by Shiva himself.<sup>66</sup>

When Shiva shot the arrow to destroy the three cities of the Tripuras, he shed tears and they became *Rudraksha* beads.

*Rudraksha* beads, the stones of the fruits of *Elaeocarpus sphaericus* are used by ascetics as garlands, armlets or to tie their top-knot as a rosary. This they do because Shiva had once given the *Rudraksha* beads to his wife Parvati as she wanted ornaments to adorn herself, and he told her that for the wife of an ascetic like him, they



Plate No. 71



Plate No. 72

were the best ornaments. Since then the ascetics in India have used the *Rudraksha* beads in the same manner as Parvati had done.

On temple sculpture the tree of *Rudraksha* is never sculpted but only the beads, mostly as rosaries in the hands of deities particularly on temples of Karnataka (pl.71).

Rajendra Prasad mentions that in the Bala-Brahma temple, Andhra Pradesh, the standing figure of a sage holds an *aksamala* of *Rudraksha* beads in his right hand which is held in *vyakhyana mudra* and in the left hand, a *kamandala*. He wears a *jata-bhara* with a large *padma* or lotus adorning the centre of his matted hair.<sup>67</sup> A good depiction of *Rudraksha* beads as a rosary is seen in the lower right hand of Shiva and Brahma among the Trinity of Gods, Kakatiya, 12th century A.D. Warangal, Andhra Pradesh.

The best depiction however, is from Pitalkhora caves of Maharashtra where a *Yaksha* is seen wearing a necklace of *Rudraksha* beads and has a two-stringed *Rudraksha* bead decoration for his coiffure (pl.72)

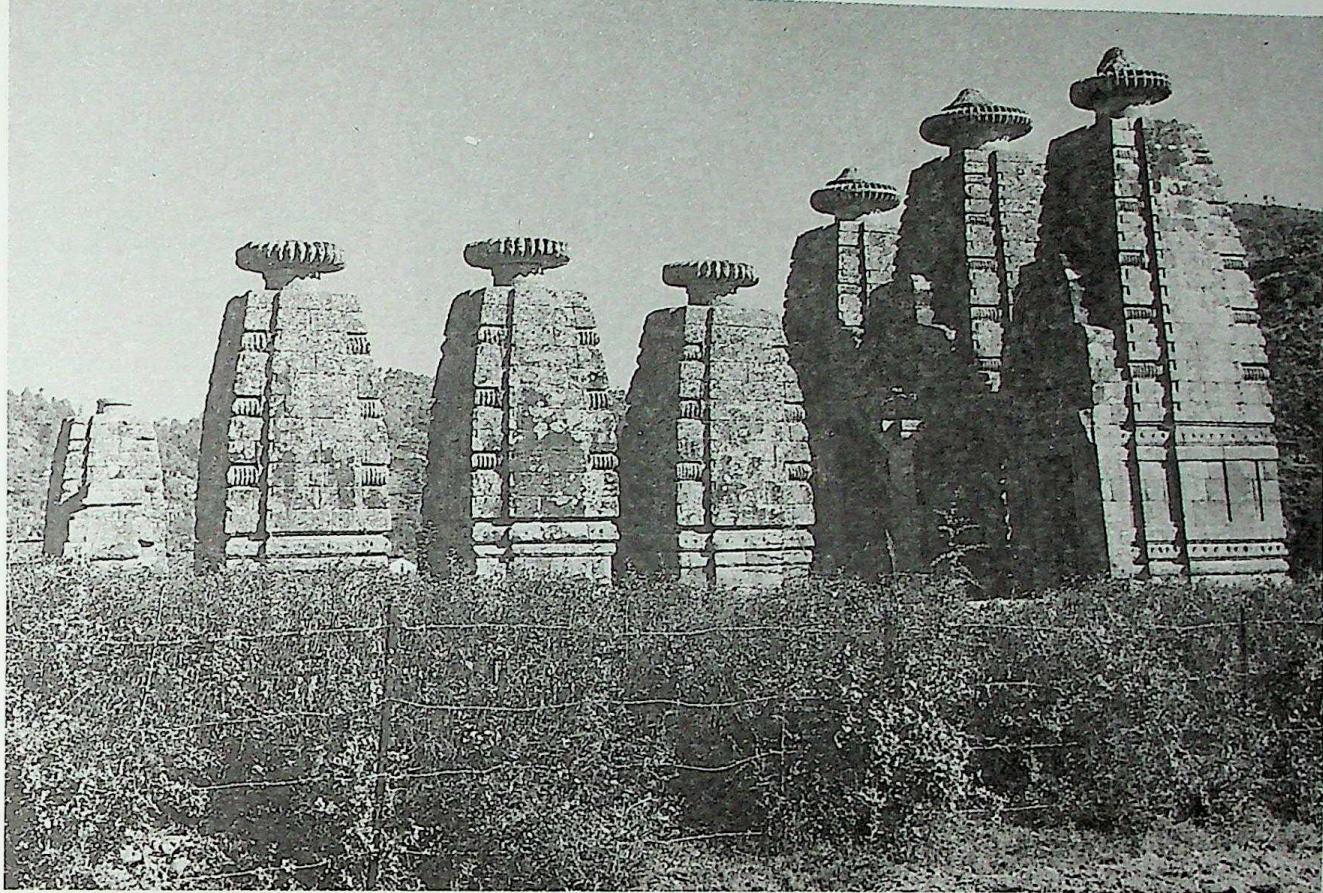


Plate No. 73

### EMBLICA OFFICINALIS Gaertn.

*Amalaki* is a medium-sized tree with yellow flowers and pale green, sour, fleshy, globose fruits. The tree flowers from March to May and fruits in the cold season. The Sanskrit name of the tree, *dhatrica* or *dhatri*, means the earth or mother, particularly the nursing mother. The tree is sacred to both Vishnu and Shiva. The reason for the sacredness of the tree both to Lakshmi and Parvati is given in the *Brihaddharma Purana*.<sup>68</sup> According to a legend, both the goddesses went to worship at Prabhasa, a sacred place in Gujarat. Parvati said to Lakshmi that she wished to worship Vishnu with a new offering. Lakshmi answered that she also wished to worship Shiva with a new offering. At this the two goddesses wept and from their tears was created the *amalaki* tree (*dhatri*) with the fruit of which both the goddesses propitiated Shiva and Vishnu. Since then the fruit and leaves of this tree are considered essential in the worship of the two gods.

The tree is worshipped on *Shivaratri* day by wrapping the sacred red and yellow thread round it, and by offering flowers and fruits to it. In Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka, in the month of *Kartik*, the tree is worshipped on *Akshaya navami*, the ninth day of *Kartik* for begetting a male child and is ceremoniously married as god *Narsi*, i.e., Vishnu, to the *Tulasi* plant which is considered an incarnation of Lakshmi who is also called *Tulasi mata*, the world mother.

*Amalaki* tree transformed itself into a beautiful woman to entice Vishnu away from the charms of Vrinda. The tree is sacred not only to the Hindus but also held sacred by the tribesmen.<sup>69</sup> The tribes of middle India credit the tree with magical properties. It is planted on the south side of the temple or the house.<sup>70</sup>

The *amalaka* fruit made in silver is given to a *Brahman* after the completion of a *vrata* kept for Shiva.<sup>71</sup> The temple *shikhara* is topped with an *amalaka* in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Kumaon and

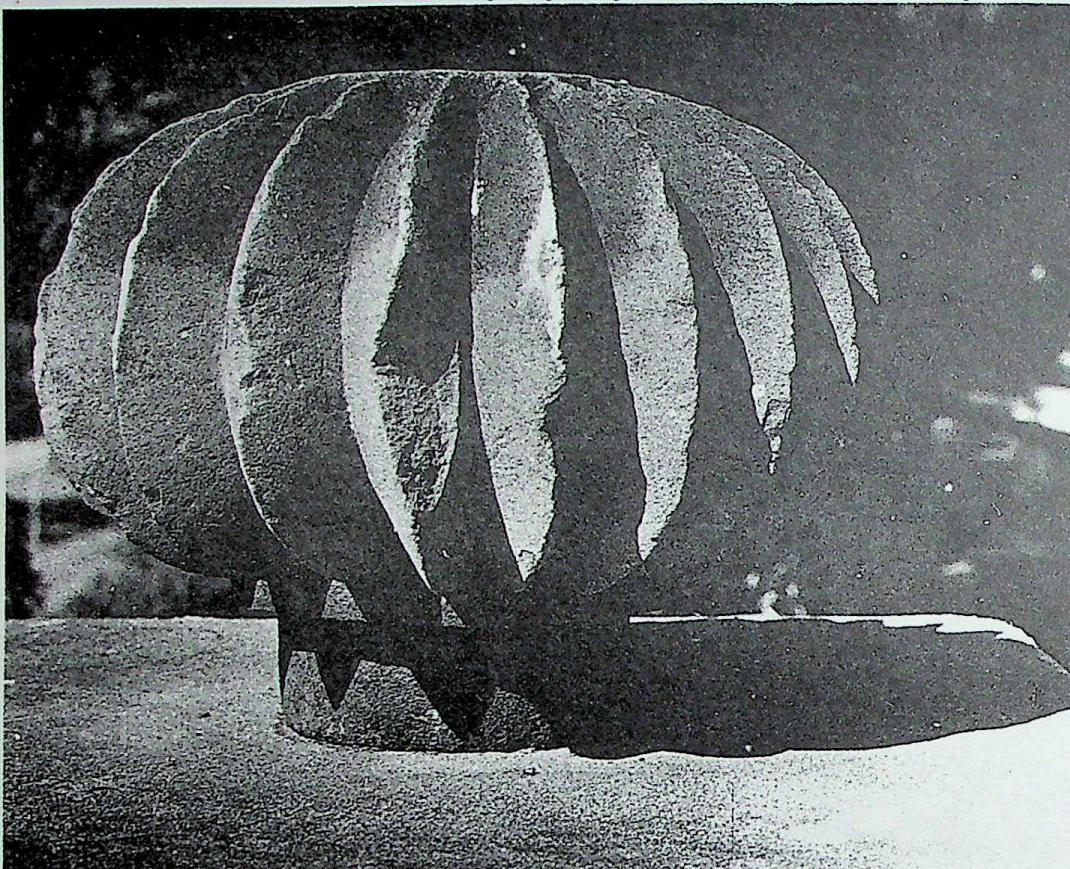


Plate No. 74

Himachal Pradesh. The sculpture of an *amalaka* on the temple *shikhara* is believed to be the fruit of the *amalaki* tree. In reality, the *amalaka* fruit is smooth and round but the stone of the fruit is hard and fluted. The model for the *amalaka* on the temple *shikhara* must be the fluted stone of the *amalaka* fruit (pl.74). The *amalaka* fruit stone is also carved on the temples to denote the number and position of the different levels of the *shikhara*.

The carbonized seeds of *amla* (*amalaka*), dated 1600 B.C. were found at Navdatoli<sup>12</sup> proving the antiquity of the tree.

### ERYTHRINA VARIEGATA Linn.

*Mandara* is a highly ornamental, medium-sized tree. Its stem and branches are covered with conical prickles. It has bright red flowers in dense racemes which appear before the leaves arise. The compound leaves have three broad, ovate leaflets and these tri-foliate leaves are held sacred by the *shaivites* as they resemble the *trishula* of Shiva.

Janardana Perumal temple, Kerala has a relief showing a *rishi-patni*, the wife of a sage, standing under a tree of *Mandara* and giving alms which she is doling out with a spoon into a *thali*, a plate carried by a young man on his head (pl.75). The trifoliate leaves of the *Mandara* tree are very clear but appear as if they are folded. The tree grows commonly in the deciduous forests of India.

A pillar decoration at Meenakshi-Sundareshwara temple, Madura shows a deity with matted hair sitting in meditation under a *Mandara* tree and people praying to him (pl.76). Very likely the deity is Shiva. Another pillar decoration from Meenakshi temple shows a *Siva-linga* under the *Mandara* tree. The scene depicted is the *abhisheka* of the *Siva-linga* by an elephant who is pouring water on it (pl.77). The photograph is not very clear as the panel has been white-washed. The tri-foliate leaves of the tree are also sculpted in Avadayarkovil, a *shaiva* temple in Tamil Nadu.

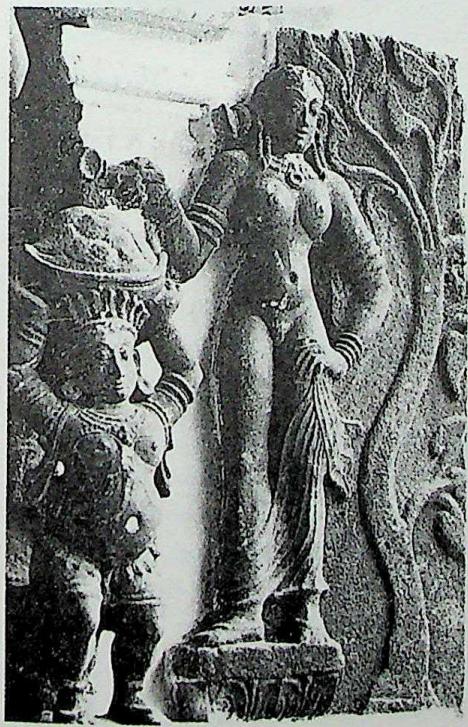
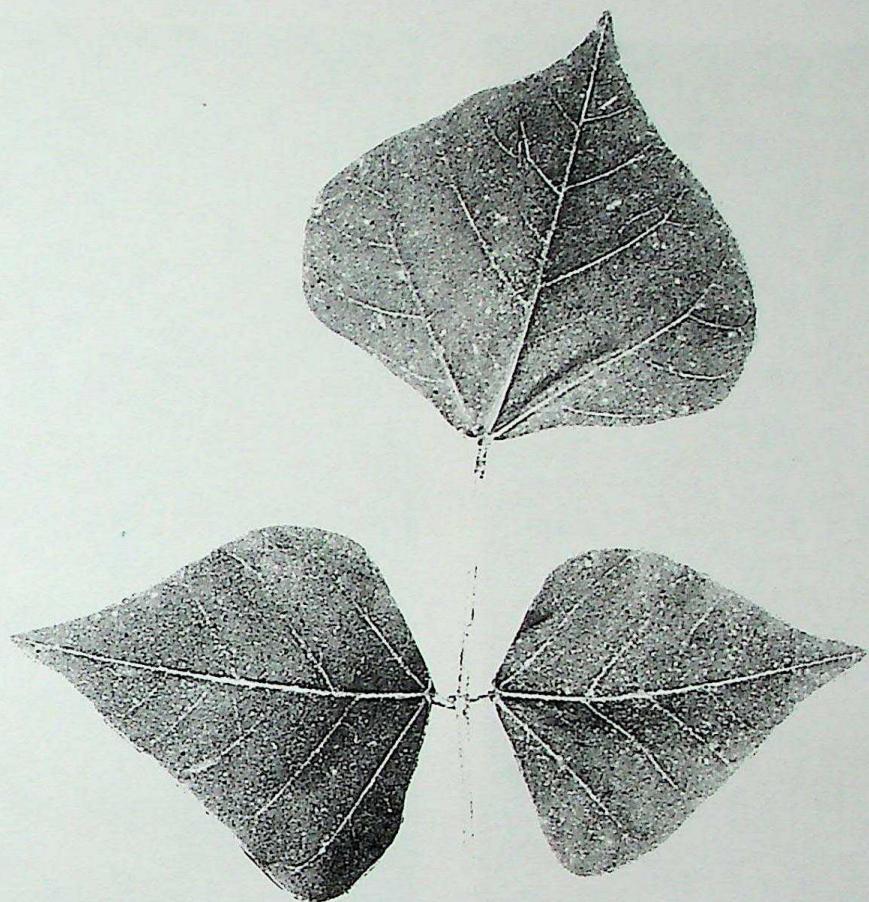


Plate No. 75



Plate No. 76



Plate No. 77



Euphorbia species

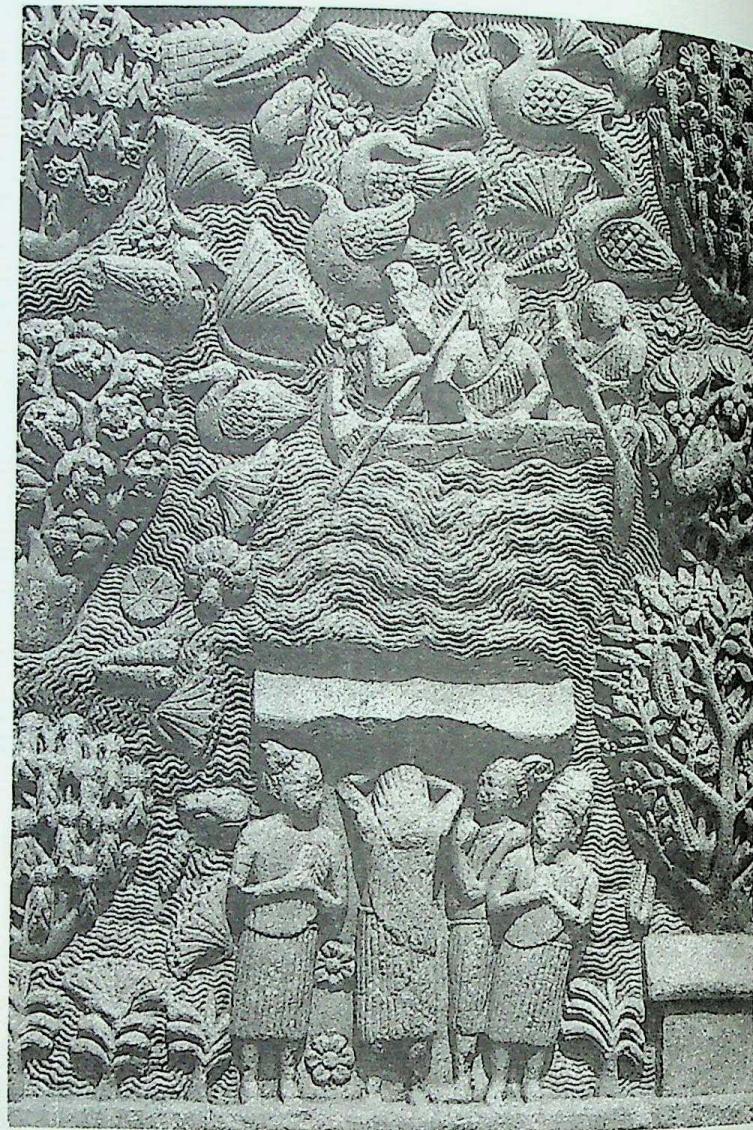


Plate No. 78

## EUPHORBIA SPECIES

According to a Buddhist legend, Buddha along with the Kashyaps, was on his way to give a sermon but could not cross the river as it was in flood. The Kashyaps went to get a boat and on their return found Buddha walking on the river which convinced them of his divinity. Buddha's walk is shown by the sculpture of six-petalled flowers called in the legend as lotus flowers. Buddha used to go for a walk in Sarnath and wherever he walked, lotus flowers grew. In Sarnath, lotus flowers carved in stone are still present in a row and this row is called the walk of the Buddha.

Plate 78 depicts the episode of Buddha walking on the water, known as the miracle of Sravasti sculpted at Sanchi. At the bottom of the panel are three Kashyaps and Buddha. In the middle are three Kashyaps sitting in a boat on a river which is in flood. The presence of the Buddha is shown symbolically, first by the lotus, i.e., six-petalled flowers seen floating on the waters and secondly by an empty seat or platform under the *Udumbara* tree on the lower right-side of the panel. Other plants sculpted are the plantain trees at the base and moving clockwise are, *kadamba*, then an unidentified tree, *Naga kesar*, lotus, Euphorbia, mango and then the *Udumbara* tree. The panel is interesting because of the depiction of Euphorbia. Euphorbia species have not been seen depicted on any other temple. The plant grows on waste lands particularly in the sub-Himalayan tract in the western Himalayas and in arid zones.



Plate No. 79

### FICUS BENGHALENSIS Linn.

*Nyagrodha* is a large, spreading, evergreen tree producing aerial roots from its branches which go down into the soil and give additional support to the everspreading tree and is thus called *Bahupada*, the many footed tree. It has ovate-orbicular or ovate-elliptical, coriaceous, entire leaves and red, globose figs. This is a sacred Fig tree associated with Shiva. It is given the status of a sovereign among trees.<sup>73</sup> The tree is compared to the Supreme Soul and has immense symbolism as it is a vast spreading shade giving tree. The symbolism of the tree connected with the Creation is mentioned in *Vishnu Purana*. "As the wide-spreading *Nyagrodha* tree is compressed in a small seed, so at the time of dissolution, the whole universe is comprehended in *thee* as its germ. As the *Nyagrodha* germinates from the seed and becomes first a shoot and rises into loftiness, so the created world proceeds from *thee*, and expands into magnitude. As the bark and leaves of the Plantain tree are to be seen in its stem, so thou art the stem of the universe and all things are visible in *thee*."<sup>74</sup>

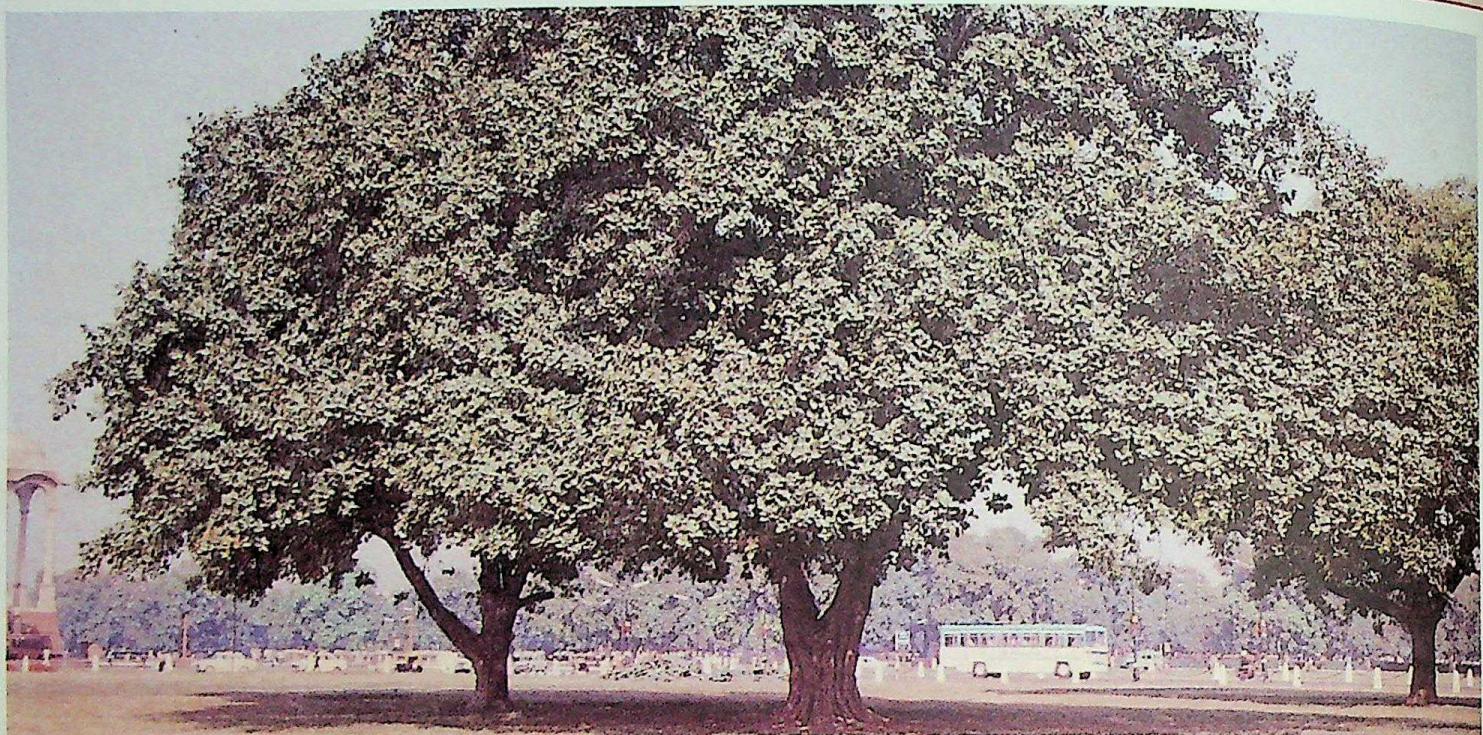
*Nyagrodha* tree must have been known from very early times and is mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*. According to *Vishnu Purana*, the tree grew on the Pushkara dvipa, the abode of Brahma. It is the *Bodhi* tree of Kashyapa muni.<sup>75</sup> The best depiction of the tree is at Sanchi where the oval-shaped leaves and globular fruit are clearly visible and the sure point of identification, the hanging roots of the tree. Elephants are seen worshipping the *Bodhi* tree (pl.80). Another panel (pl.81) shows a king and a queen worshipping the tree. For the *Nyagrodha* to be sculpted as being worshipped is because of its association with Buddha, Kapilavastu episode. According to a legend, Buddha sat for seven days under an *Ashvattha* tree, the tree of Enlightenment growing on the banks of the river Nairanjana and absorbed in the bliss of his Enlightenment. Then he rose and sat under a *Nyagrodha* tree for seven days absorbed in the bliss of his illumination. After that he sat in blissful calm under a third tree. The three trees are known as: The Tree of Enlightenment, Tree of Goatherd and the Tree of the Serpent king

### FERN LEAVES

Ferns, a common name for a large number of plants belonging to the group Filicales of the Pteridophyta, are represented in temple sculpture but mainly from Sanchi, where at present no ferns are found growing in the vicinity of the *stupas*.

Ferns are characterised by *circinate ptyxis*, i.e., the cork screw method of unfolding of leaves. The pinnate leaves are characteristic of a large number of ferns. But the most characteristic feature of ferns is the presence of sori, groups of spore bearing sporangia on some leaves which are known as sporophylls. All these characteristics of ferns are depicted on Sanchi *stupas*. Whereas many of the angiospermic plants have pinnate leaves, it is only the ferns that bear the sporangia, a distinguishing character of ferns (pl.79).

Sculptures of ferns are seen at Sanchi and decorative slabs from there are housed in the Lucknow museum and a fragment of a door panel dated 117-219 A.D. in the Mathura museum.



*Ficus benghalensis* Linn

Muchalinda respectively. The last tree is so named because Muchalinda, the serpent king, protected Buddha with his multiple hoods from a storm as Buddha sat in meditation under it.

Satyavrata, having been degraded to the position of a *Chandal*, provided the flesh of a deer for the wife and children of Vishwamitra during a twelve-year period of famine, while Vishwamitra was away on a pilgrimage. He suspended the food from the branches of a spreading Fig tree growing on the banks of the river Ganga so that he did not subject the family of Vishwamitra to the indignity of receiving food from an outcaste.<sup>76</sup> The custom of hanging flesh from the branches of the *Nyagrodha* tree is still prevalent in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu. When a cow or a buffalo calves, the placenta is tied in a cloth and hung from the *Nyagrodha* tree so that no harm comes to the newly born calf.

Among the places considered fit for worship are sacred forests, solitary groves, the shade of the *Bilva* tree, places overgrown with *Tulasi* plants, pasture lands, foot of the sacred Fig tree, *Nyagrodha* or of an *Amalaki* tree.<sup>77</sup>

The importance of the *Nyagrodha* tree is seen from the *Katyayana Srauta*, X.9.30 where the priests are asked not to give genuine *Soma* to a *rajanya* or to a *vaishya*, even when it is available. They should instead be given the juice of the *Nyagrodha* fruit, squashed in milk. Among the *kshatriyas* and the *vaishyas*, the juice of *Nyagrodha* must have pushed the *Soma*, more into the background, either because the original plant became rarer or because its enjoyment became more the privilege of the *Brahmans*. The *Nyagrodha* tree was regarded by the *kshatriyas* as a symbol of kingship.<sup>78</sup> At Ellora, Indra, the king of the celestials is seen sitting on his elephant Airavata, under the *Nyagrodha* tree, the leaves and figs of which are clearly visible (pl.82). It is one of the *Kalpavrikshas*, the wish-fulfilling tree.

*Nyagrodha* is stylised as the 'crested one.'<sup>79</sup> The tree is also associated with many other deities apart from Indra. *Nyagrodha* is called "Varuna's" in *Gobila Grhya Sutra*, IV, 7.24. Later in Jataka no.489, this tree is connected with Kubera and various other *rukka-devatas*.<sup>80</sup>

The ability of the tree to support its ever growing branches and roots which hang down and act as props over an ever-widening circle represents eternal life. It is also a symbol of Brahma and worshipped on *Vata-Savitri* day and on Saturdays in the month of *Jyestha*. It is the abode of Jyestha Devi, the elder sister of Lakshmi. Whereas Lakshmi loves cleanliness and beauty, Jyestha Devi loves dirt and squalor.

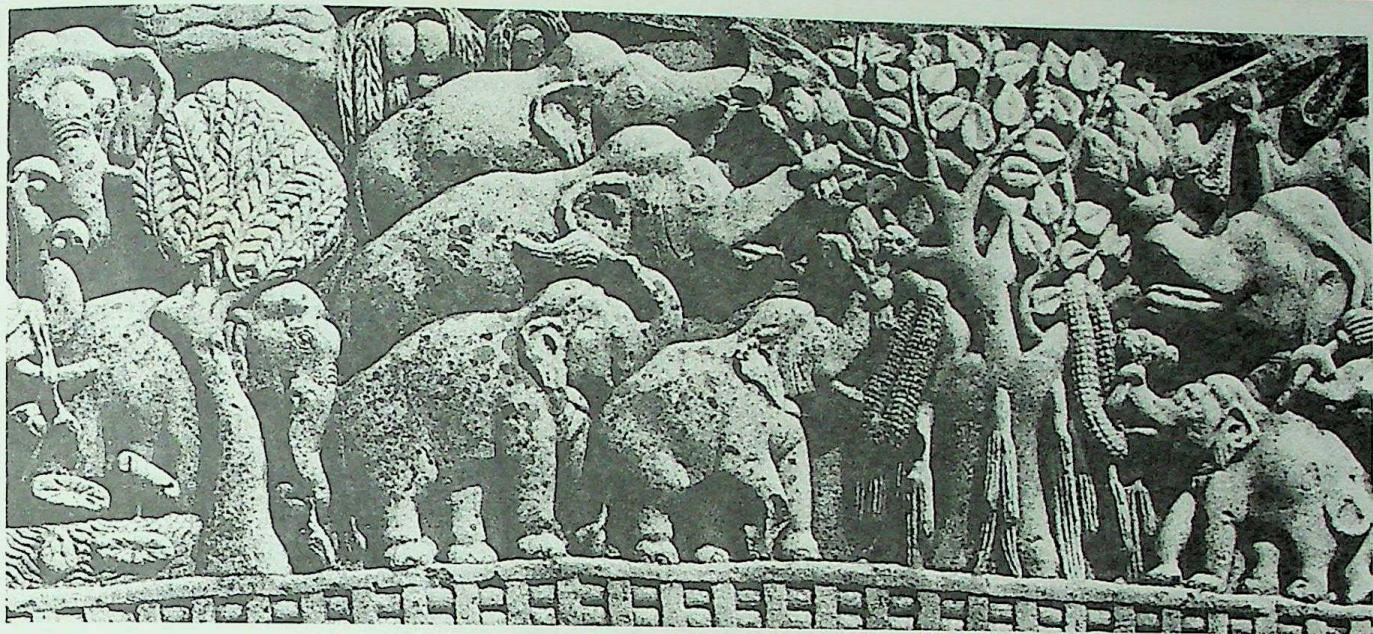


Plate No. 80

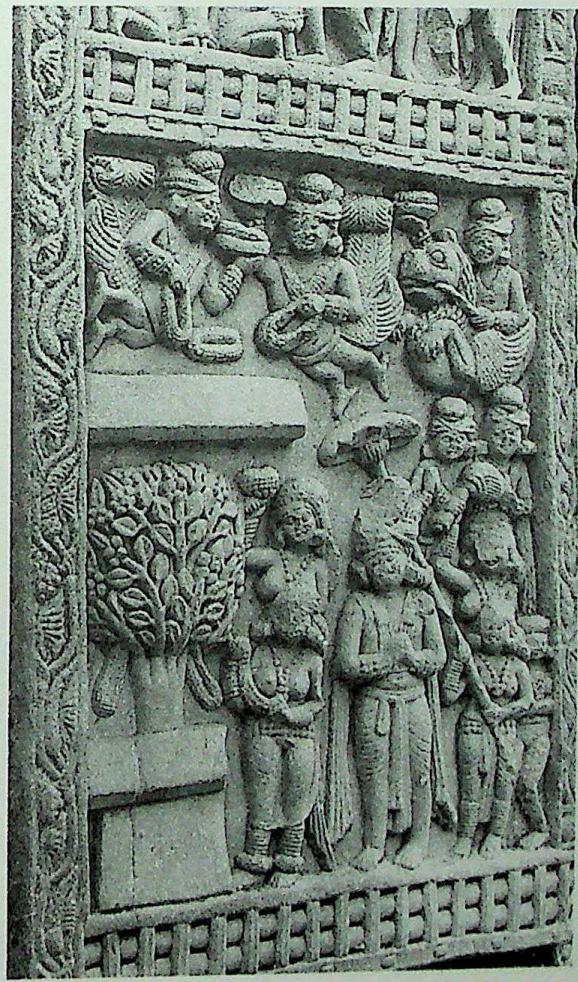


Plate No. 81

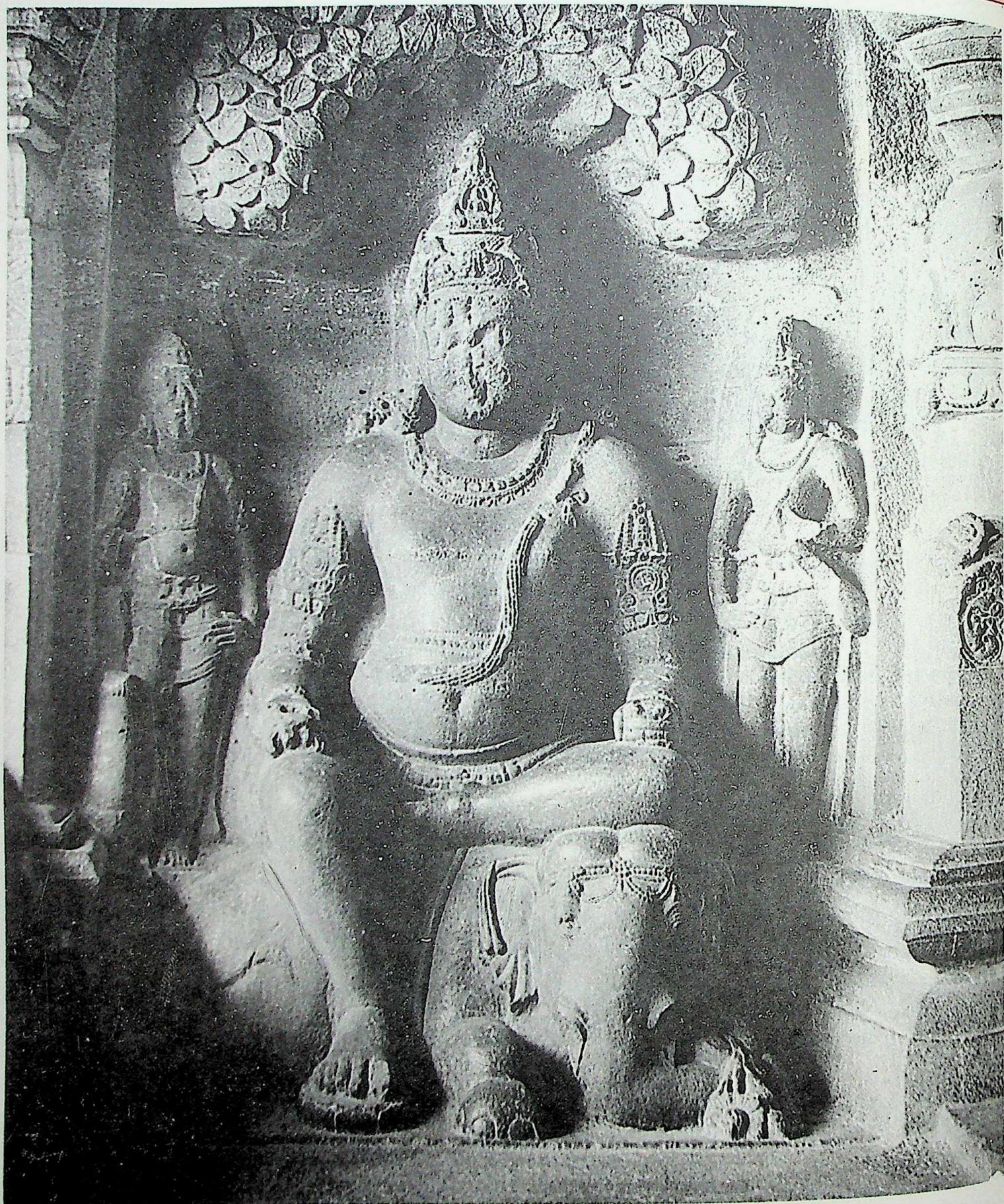


Plate No. 82

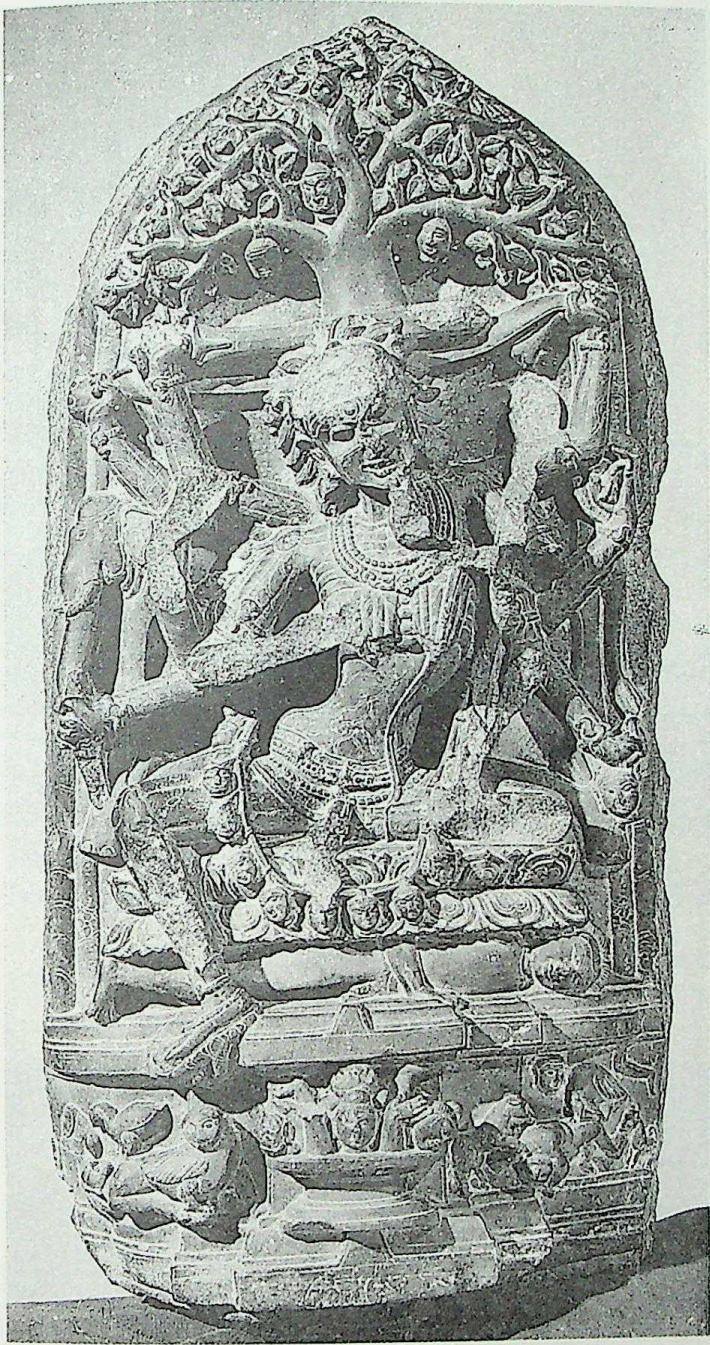


Plate No. 83

According to a story in the *Mahabharata*,<sup>81</sup> Savitri, a princess married Satyavan, the son of a blind king who with his wife and son was living in exile in a forest, even when she was told by Narada muni that according to astrological predictions Satyavan had only one year more to live. Savitri having set her mind on Satyavan for his virtues, insisted that she would only marry him and added that a Hindu woman having once chosen her husband, did not marry another. Her father, though unhappy at her choice of a husband, had to give in and Savitri married Satyavan. A year passed. On the appointed day of Satyavan's death, Savitri insisted on accompanying him to the forest when he went to fetch wood for the domestic fires. After cutting the wood for a while, Satyavan complained of a headache and lay down under a *Nyagrodha* tree. Savitri realised that the time of his death had arrived but she was not willing to accept it. As Satyavan went into a deep coma, Savitri saw Yama come and take away his soul. Savitri left the inert body of Satyavan and followed the God of death. Three times Yama stopped and asked her to turn back as her time of death had not come but she insisted on following him till he yielded three boons to her but Yama made it clear that the boons will not include bringing Satyavan back to life. The first boon Savitri asked and Yama granted was the restoration of sight to her father-in-law and mother-in-law. The second boon was the restoration of their kingdom to them and the third that she should be the mother of sons. Yama granted her all the boons. Savitri then asked how was she to be the mother of sons when her husband lay dead. Yama was impressed by her cleverness, faithfulness and persistence and restored Satyavan back to life. Since Satyavan lay dead under the *Nyagrodha* tree and Savitri by her persistence and love brought him back to life, on Vata-Savitri day women wishing a long life for their husbands, tie the sacred thread seven times round the trunk of the *Nyagrodha* tree (*Vad* or *Vata*) and pray for his long life.

An important aspect of Goddess Kali is Bhadrakali, Kali of the Banyan forest. Banyan tree being very large, it is called *Bargad*. She is worshipped before entering the realm of *Vatarangesvara*, i.e., the Lord of the *Vata* or the Banyan forest.<sup>82</sup> Kali being the destroyer of evil, is usually depicted with the severed heads of her victims. In plate 83 the severed heads of the evil beings killed by her are hanging from the branches of the *Nyagrodha* tree under which she is sitting.

Bosch mentions that certain trees, particularly the sacred Fig tree and the Banyan tree, are often identified

not only with deities of higher order but also with beings belonging to the humbler mythology. Referring to the *Mahabharata*, he writes (Mbh. xii, 69.41) that the cutting of sacred trees (*caityavrikshas*) should be avoided, even a leaf of a sacred tree must not be destroyed, for these serve as the abode of gods, *yakshas*, *rakshasas*, *nagas*, *pisachas*, *gandharvas*, *apsaras* and cruel *bhutas*.<sup>83</sup> He obviously considers the sacred Fig tree to be the *Ashvattha*. In fact both the Fig trees *Ashvattha* and *Nyagrodha* are sacred.

Shiva as *Dakshinamurti* is sculpted in most *shaiva* temples, "As *Dakshinamurti*, Shiva tramples again the dwarf of ignorance as a young teacher. He teaches the highest wisdom to the most ancient seers, a wisdom that transcends ego." Shiva sits under the banyan tree symbolising the vast shade of celestial bliss, the bliss born of contentment, a spirit of renunciation, sacrifice, simple living and sublime thought. In his presence which is characterised by *nirdvandvata*, unaffected by the extremes like cold and heat, age and youth, palatable and unpalatable, the snake, the lion and the deer, so diametrically opposed, come together in a close bond of friendly feeling towards one another.<sup>84</sup>

According to a legend in *Siva Purana*, Shiva's wife Sati, committed *Sati*, i.e., immolated herself as her father Daksha performed a great *yajna*, a sacrifice to which all the great and small divinities were invited but Shiva was left out as he considered him unworthy of being invited to such an august gathering. When Sati heard of the sacrifice, she was incensed at the insult shown to her husband. She went to her father's house and in spite of Daksha asking Shiva to forgive him, she held her breath, a form of committing suicide. Her body fell into the sacrificial pit and got charred. Shiva was inconsolable. He picked up the charred body of Sati and roamed around the universe, lamenting. As years passed, Sati's body disintegrated and fell off limb by limb and wherever parts of her body fell, they became places of pilgrimage and are called *Shakti-pithas*. According to a slightly different version of the same legend, Shiva carrying the dead body of Sati in his arms, started a *Tandava* dance which was so fierce and vigorous, it shook the universe. The gods fearing that the universe would come to an end, requested Vishnu, the Preserver of all things created, to intercede on their behalf. Vishnu tried to pacify Shiva and not succeeding, cut Sati's body with his *chakra*. After Sati's body fell off, Shiva



Plate No. 84

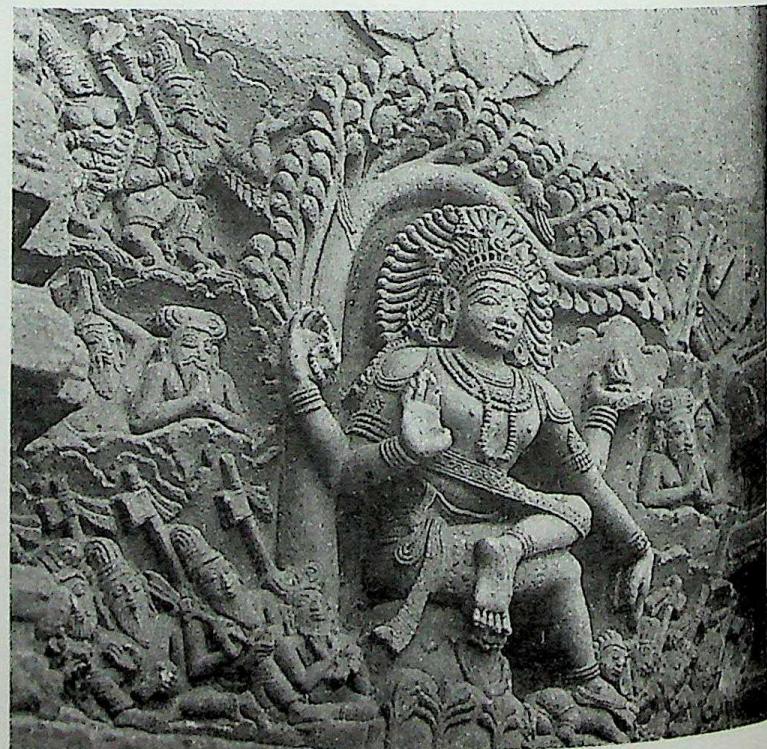


Plate No. 85



Plate No. 86



Plate No. 87

sat under a tree of *Nyagrodha* and went into a *samadhi*. The *Yogic* posture is worshipped as *Dakshinamurti* as Shiva sat facing *Dakshina*. In this form he is a teacher or *guru* of *yoga*, music and allied sciences.<sup>85</sup> The tree depicted is usually *Nyagrodha* though sometimes the leaves resemble those of *Ashvattha*. Masthaniah writes that according to the description furnished by the *Silparatna* and the *Agama* texts of the *shaivites*, the *Vyakhyana Dakshinamurti* should be seated under a banyan tree (pl.84).<sup>86</sup> Sometimes the *Nyagrodha* tree is described as having no hanging, aerial roots. In plate 85, a parrot and a squirrel are sculpted on the tree. The parrot had overheard Shiva tell Sati that if she ever died, he would never remarry. The parrot talked scandal saying that Shiva had lied to Sati as he later married Parvati but was told that Shiva was true to his word as Parvati was Sati reincarnated.

Two interesting sculptural panels illustrating the legend of Garuda and the pot of nectar, and Garuda with Vibhavasu and Supratika are associated with the *Nyagrodha* tree. Plate 86 shows Garuda holding an elephant in one hand and a tortoise in the other with a branch of the *Nyagrodha* tree in his beak. According to a story in the *Mahabharata*, Vinata, the mother of Garuda and Kadru, the mother of serpents, were co-wives. They had a wager which Vinata lost because of the deception of Kadru and thus became her slave. To free his mother of her bondage, Garuda agreed to bring *amrita* from Indra's heaven for Kadru and her children. While on his way to secure *amrita*, he felt extremely hungry and asked his father Kashyapa for food. Kashyapa advised him to eat the two demons who had taken the form of an elephant and a tortoise. The elephant with face downwards was continually dragging his elder brother because of a hostility between them from an earlier birth. There was a *rishi* named Vibhavasu who was exceedingly wrathful and his younger brother Supratika was averse to keeping his wealth jointly with him and constantly spoke of partition. Vibhavasu told him that it was from foolishness that persons blinded by love of wealth desire to partition their patrimony. And added that their enemies in the guise of friends cause estrangement in the family. After thus admonishing Supratika, Vibhavasu cursed him to become an elephant as he wished to separate. Supratika was enraged at this and in turn cursed Vibhavasu to become a tortoise. And thus on account of wealth these two fools from each other's curse fell from the position of sages to that of demons and became an elephant and a tortoise respectively.

As advised by his father, Garuda lifted the Tortoise and the Elephant and flew to the shores of lake Alamba where grew many sacred trees and among them was a *Nyagrodha* of very large proportions. When Garuda with his captives alighted on the tree, that particular branch full of leaves shook and broke, but Garuda quickly took the branch in his beak as he saw the diminutive *rishis*, the *Balakhilyas* hanging from the branch with their heads facing downwards and engaged in ascetic penances. Afraid, that if the branch broke, the *rishis* would die and he would incur a sin, Garuda held the elephant and the tortoise firmly with his claws and rose skywards. The *rishis* were struck with wonder at that sight, an act which was beyond even the power of gods and they gave the name Garuda to the bird, which name means the bearer of heavy weight.



Plate No. 88

Garuda flew northwards to Gandhamadana where on the pleadings of *rishi* Kashyapa, the *Balakhilya rishis* abandoned the *Nyagrodha* tree and went to perform ascetic penances on Mt. Himavata. The tree branch was thrown away by Garuda and sitting on the summit of the mountain, he ate the elephant and the tortoise.<sup>87</sup>

In plate 87 is depicted another scene from the same story. Garuda is carrying the pot of nectar. Getting tired he alighted on a branch of the *Nyagrodha* tree. The *Balakhilya rishis* born of Brahma's semen which got ejaculated due to excitement at seeing Parvati at her marriage, were hanging from the *Nyagrodha* tree. Garuda did not want the branch to break and cause their death. He pushed the tree trunk with his feet and thus saved them.<sup>88</sup> The tree is depicted very clearly and the leaves are unmistakably of the *Nyagrodha*. The tree mentioned in *Mahabharata* has very large proportions.



Plate No. 89



Plate No. 90

The sacredness attached to the *Nyagrodha* tree is so great, a specific mention of it is given in *Siva Purana* where it is said that if a slayer of a *Brahmana* circumambulates the trees of *Vata* and *Bilva* reciting verses from *Rudrasamhita*, he will become purified of the sin of killing a *Brahmana*.<sup>89</sup>

*Nyagrodha* is called *Kalpadruma* or *Kalpavriksha*, the wish-fulfilling tree.<sup>90</sup> At Besnagar in Vidisha was found the *Kalpadruma* Capital. The tree depicted is the *Nyagrodha* which has the *ashtanidhis* hanging from it. These are: an inverted conch shell, a fully opened lotus flower, two large-sized pots overflowing with coins and four bulging bags tied with strings and presumably full of coins (pl.88).

During the universal deluge at the end of an epoch, Vishnu as a newly born babe floats between the *yugas* on a leaf of *Nyagrodha* also called *Vata*. 'Jalasayin and

Plate No. 91

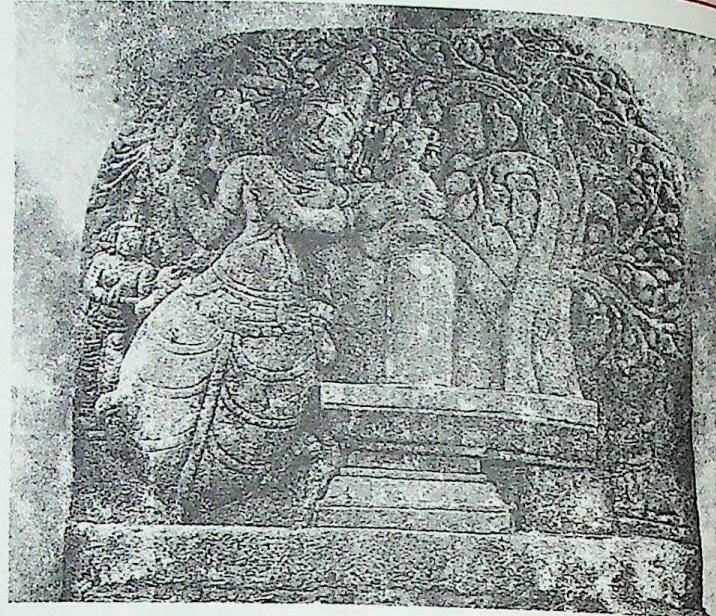
*Vatapatrasayin* aspects of Vishnu, which are ideologically similar to the *Seshasayanamurti*, are also represented in this particular attitude.<sup>91</sup> *Vatapatrasayin* aspect shows the god as an infant lying on a Banyan leaf floating in the primeval waters and sucking his big toe.<sup>92</sup> Vishnu floats on a *Vata* leaf (*Nyagrodha*) during the universal deluge which destroys the entire universe. Plate 89 depicts this legend in an unusual way. The *Vata* leaf on which Vishnu is lying is attached to the tree and not floating. This leaf is highly magnified compared to the other leaves on the tree. *Matsya Purana* narrates that sage Markandeya had a vision of Vishnu as Narayana or the eternal *Brahman* floating on the surface of primordial waters in the form of a newly born babe, poised on a branch of the Banyan tree.<sup>93</sup> The custom of sitting under the shade of a *Nyagrodha* tree and give discourse is age-old. Quoting Agrawala, '... relating to the glory of *Sthanu Tirtha*, *Sthanu Vata* and *Sanihita Tirtha*. Once *Sanatkumara* was seated under *Sthanu Vata* surrounded by *Balakhilya* and other *rishis* when Markandeya approached him and asked the *Mahatamya* of *Sthanehvara* together with the names of accessory *Tirthas* around it.'<sup>94</sup> Bosch also mentions about the *Sthanu* aspect of the *Nyagrodha* tree, "... one of the numerous names by which *Siva-Rudra* is known in the epic is *Sthanu*, 'wooden post,' 'column,' 'pillar,' or 'bare stem,' 'leafless stem,' 'tree stump,' besides which stands *sthanubhuta*, meaning, the one whose essence is a 'pillar,' an illusion to the wishing tree because, in spite of his being a *Sthanu*, he through his supreme qualities answers even better the wishes and needs of the world."<sup>95</sup>

The names *Ashvattha* and *Nyagrodha*, the two most well known Fig trees, are mixed up in ancient texts. The sacred Fig tree *Ashvattha* is described as possessing downward growing aerial branches.<sup>96</sup> In fact, *Ashvattha* does not possess aerial branches while the *Nyagrodha* does. Also, whereas the *Nyagrodha* has oval-shaped leaves, *Ashvattha* tree has very pointed apices and it is not possible to mix the identity of the two trees.

*Nyagrodha* is the sacred tree of Chamunda, a form of Durga, the name she got for killing the demons Cunda and Munda.<sup>97</sup> Also of Indra, the god of the celestials. He is depicted at Ellora caves sitting under the *Nyagrodha*.

An A.S.I. report describes an inscribed Gandhara sculpture of Buddha sitting cross-legged on an ornamental stool in meditation, under a tree with a robe covering his shoulders and most of the feet. The another remarks, 'it is interesting to note that the foliage round the halo is that of the banyan tree (*Ficus indica*) and not that of the *pipal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*).<sup>98</sup> *Ficus indica* is the earlier Latin name of *Ficus benghalensis*. In fact the foliage of the panel mentioned has no resemblance to either of the *Ficus* trees. Banyan tree has oval-shaped alternate leaves whereas in this sculpture the leaves are opposite with rounded apex and the apical leaf on the branch is much larger.

Plate 90 shows the worship of the *Nyagrodha*, the *Bodhi* tree of Kashyapa. The figs and the hanging roots are clear. The tree is described as surrounded by elephants.



## FICUS BENGHALENSIS VARIETY KRISHNAE C.D.C.

The tree popularly known as Krishna's butter cup is a small or medium sized much branched tree with cupuliform leaves similar to those of *Ficus religiosa* but cupped at the base and long petioled. A general belief associated with the tree is that Lord Krishna as a child, used to fold the leaf of the tree to make a cup out of it for eating butter and since then the leaf has developed the natural cup at its base. The tree is not found commonly and is mostly cultivated.

The only depiction of this tree that the author has come across is in Kachchhapesvarar temple, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu (pl.91). Vishnu in his *Kurma avatara*, (tortoise incarnation) is worshipping the *linga* under the tree. Behind the *Kurma*, is his wife Lakshmi standing in a worshipful attitude. Birds are sitting on the tree and on the lower extreme right side, *Nandi*, the mount of Shiva, is sitting. The shape of some leaves, when seen from a distance appear to be round, some oval and some with a pointed apex like the leaves of the *Ashvattha*. In this tree the leaves showing different facets appear as they are of different shapes. Traditionally, a *Siva-linga* is placed under a *Bilva* tree but since most *Ficus* trees are sacred to Shiva, it is not surprising through unusual to see a *Siva-linga* under this tree even though the tree is held sacred by the *vishnuites* and not *shaivites*.

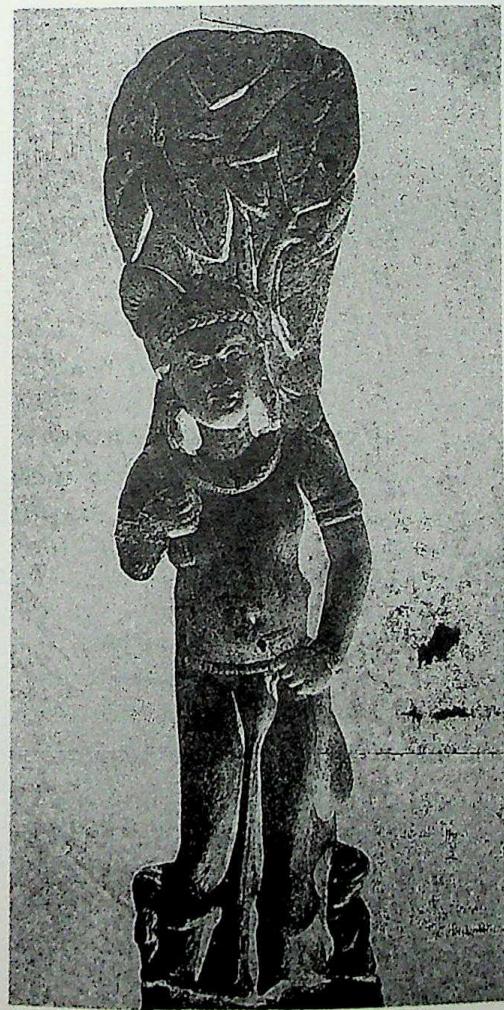


Plate No. 92

## FICUS ELASTICA Roxb.

Commonly known as the Indian Rubber tree, this is a large, handsome, evergreen tree with a dense crown of dark green foliage and spreading branches. It is not sacred to the Hindus, Jains or the Buddhists, nor does the tree grow commonly in India except in the outer Himalayas, Nepal to Eastern Assam, Khasi hills to Myanmar, but is cultivated as an ornamental plant in gardens.

The panel with the rubber plant as a tree motif is strange as it was found near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh but it is not indigenous to the area. Another point to note is that normally a *vrikshaka*, a young maiden is shown standing under a tree. In this panel a man or a *yaksha* is standing under the tree in place of a maiden (pl.92). The author has not come across any archaeological, indological or religious literature to suggest the significance of sculpting the Rubber plant on temples. The only explanation can be that since a large number of sculptures of trees have been found in or near Mathura, the cult of tree worship was prevalent there from circa 1st century B.C. to 2nd century A.D., and the Rubber plant was one of the trees sculpted along with the others without there being any particular reason behind it.



Plate No. 93

### FICUS GLOMERATA Roxb.

*Udumbara* is a moderate to large-sized tree which grows up to 18m. in height. Its fruits, the figs arise in clusters on short, leafless branches. They are globular, reddish in colour and with a sweet flavour. The leaves are ovate or oblong-ovate and the tree fruits from March to July.

*Udumbara* tree is held sacred and its wood is used in sacrificial fires. The ripe fruit is kept on the person to avert the evil eye. The tree is held sacred as Kanaka muni Bodhisattava attained enlightenment or *Buddhi* under it and, therefore, it is worshipped as a *Bodhi* tree (pl.93).<sup>99</sup> It is held in veneration by the Hindus, both *vishnuites* and *shaivites*. 'The *atti* or *Udumbara* is of special importance to the *vishnuites*, as of all the trees, it is viewed as a manifestation of Lord Vishnu himself. The *Vishnu Sahasranama* includes *Udumbara* among the thousand names of Vishnu. A special preference of the *Udumbara* tree for Vishnu images was in vogue in the 3rd and 4th century A.D. as attested by an inscription discovered at Nagarjunakonda which refers to the consecration of *AshtabhujaSwami* made of *Udumbara* wood.<sup>100</sup>

*Shaivites* connect the tree to Lord Shiva. Shiva at Tiruvorriyur, is the god of the ant-hill abode (of serpents). The priests claim to have seen the serpent god believed to dwell in an underground passage connecting the ant hill in the shrine to an *atti* tree outside.<sup>101</sup> This could possibly be the *Muchalinda* tree of *naga Muchalinda* under which Gautama Buddha sat for seven days after getting Enlightenment. The other possibility is *Artocarpus heterophyllus*.

The tree is sacred to Kaumari, the female energy or *Shakti* of Kumara (Skanda-Karttikeya), the son of Shiva.<sup>102</sup> In spite of *Udumbara* tree's association with the Hindu legends and beliefs, the author has seen the tree being depicted on only one Hindu temple, i.e., the Virupaksha temple, Pattadkal, Karnataka. The tree is depicted as a part of the forest flora with *rishis* practising penance. The best depictions are from Bharhut where the tree is shown being worshipped as a *Bodhi* tree. In pl.93, the tree is being worshipped by four men, while two men are adoring the stone platform under the tree. Floral garlands as offerings are hanging on the tree, laden with leaves and figs. The man on the right is carrying a pot full of figs that he might have gathered from the tree.



Plate No. 94

### FICUS RELIGIOSA Linn.

A large shade giving tree, *Ashvattha* grows wild as well as is cultivated near villages and temples but never in the house. The tree has simple, petiolate leaves with a characteristic elongated, pointed apex. The fruits are small, rounded, reddish coloured figs known botanically as syconie.

*Ashvattha* tree is held sacred by the Hindus and the Buddhists. Hindus consider its roots to be Brahma, trunk Shiva and branches as Vishnu. According to *Mahabharata*, 'Ashvattha,' having its roots above and branches below is eternal . . . He who knows it, knows the *Vedas*. Downwards and upwards are stretched its branches which are enlarged by the qualities; its sprouts are the objects of sense. Downwards, its roots leading to action are extended to this world of men.<sup>103</sup> 'The sacredness of *Ashvattha* cannot be known nor its end, nor its beginning, nor its support.'<sup>104</sup> 'The one who worships *Ashvattha* daily, worships the whole universe.'<sup>105</sup>

There appears to have been some confusion in the minds of the poets who composed the *Mahabharata* regarding the identity of the *Ashvattha*. *Ashvattha* tree does not grow any 'roots above,' but the *Nyagrodha* tree does. It is the *Ashvattha* tree that is associated with the three gods Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, but not the *Nyagrodha* tree. Both trees however, are Fig trees and held sacred.

The sacredness of the *Ashvattha* comes perhaps from the old *vedic* ritual of kindling the sacrificial fire at religious ceremonies by friction between two peculiarly shaped pieces of wood, one of which was the *Ashvattha* wood and the ceremony was called, 'birth of Agni.'<sup>106</sup>

*Ashvattha* has been held in veneration from pre-historic times. The most well-known depiction of it is on a seal from Mohenjodaro, circa 2500 B.C. which shows the antiquity of the sacredness of the *Ashvattha* tree (pl.94). The tree depicted on the seal was obviously for worship.

In spite of the fact that the *Ashvattha* tree till the present times is held in great veneration by the Hindus, it is sparingly sculpted on Hindu temples. It is worshipped by Hindus mainly to secure the help of the magical powers of the tree as its branches are believed to drive away enemies, its leaves produce intelligence in the child and fulfils all desires particularly for getting a male child. But in spite of such strong beliefs in the efficacy of the tree, the tree is considered magically dangerous and is not planted near a house. Its dedication has to be performed in silence and its name remains unspoken, a taboo probably connected with the belief that the spirits of the ancestors dwell in the tree or are embedded in it.<sup>107</sup> There is a popular superstition that if a boy dies during his thread ceremony, his spirit haunts the *Ashvattha* tree.<sup>108</sup> Perhaps, because of these beliefs the tree is not frequently sculpted on Hindu temples. Two rare depictions of it are, one in Tamil Nadu and the other in Saurashtra in Gujarat. In Tamil Nadu, at Sri Alagiyamambirayara temple, *Ashvattha* tree is sculpted in a hunting scene (pl.95). This depiction is not of a religious nature but is decorative with birds sitting on the tree and a hunter aiming an arrow at them.

According to tradition, Krishna was sitting under an *Ashvattha* tree when Jara, a hunter mistaking his foot for a deer, the only part of his body visible to him, pierced it with an arrow.<sup>109</sup> The Hindu temple where this episode is depicted along with a *Ashvattha* tree, is a small temple at Bhalka in Saurashtra, Gujarat. Bhalka is believed to be the actual site of the tragedy. The temple site and the adjacent other shrines in the same complex are very old but this small temple with its tree motif of *Ashvattha* has been painted and is difficult to date.

*Ashvattha* is frequently depicted on Buddhist shrines. Buddhists revere the tree as Siddhartha Gautama attained *Buddhi* (wisdom or Enlightenment) under it, and since then it is known as the *Bodhi* tree. It is sculpted extensively on

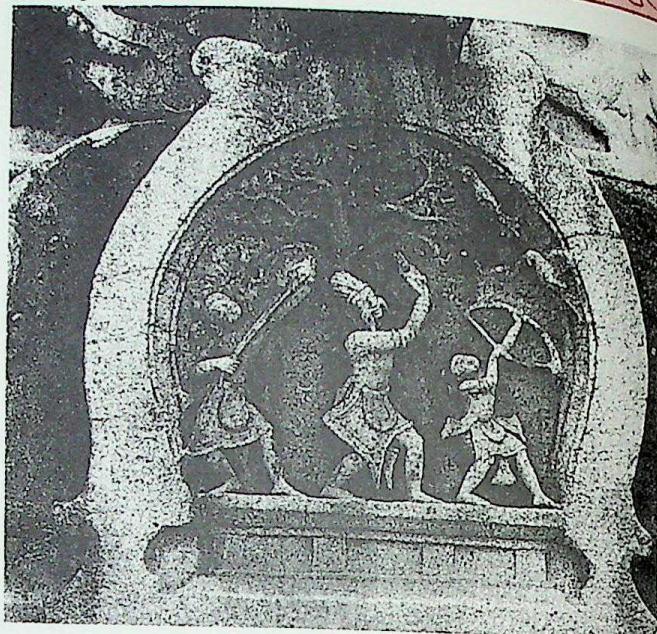


Plate No. 95

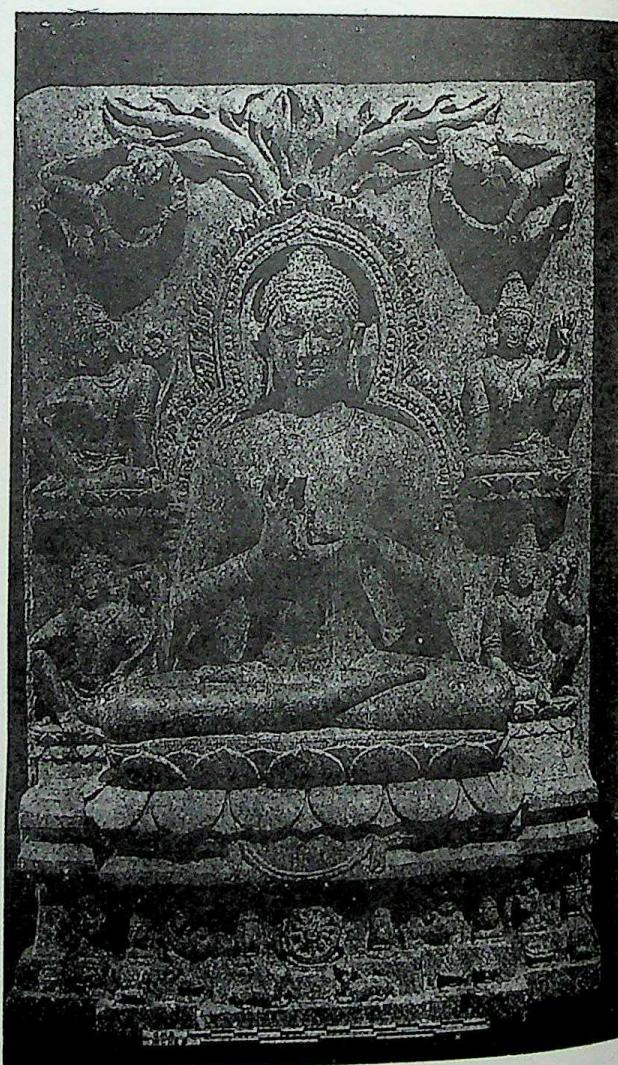


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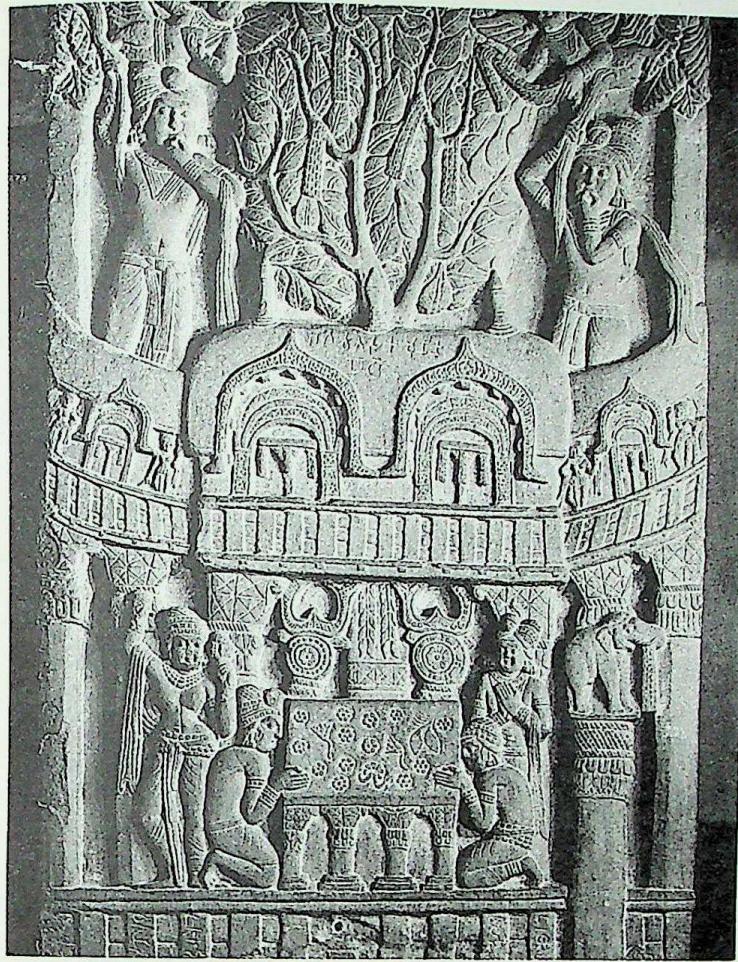


Plate No. 97

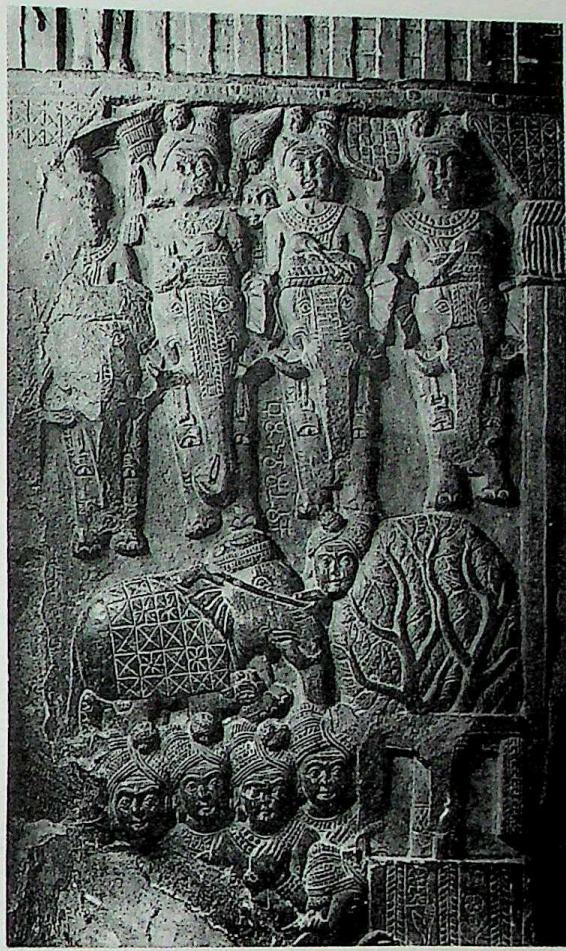


Plate No. 98

Buddhist stupas and chaityas at Sanchi and Bharhut in Madhya Pradesh, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, Mathura and Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh, Nalanda in Bihar, Ratnagiri in Orissa, and other places. Gandhara sculptures showing the tree are stylised and botanically not easily identifiable.

A common form of depicting the *Ashvattha* tree in Buddhist shrines is by showing Gautama Buddha sitting under the tree either in *Dhyananamudra* (meditating pose) (pl.96), *Bhumisparsamudra* (touching the earth) as a sign that the earth is a witness, or in a pose of giving benediction. In all such panels only a couple of branches of the tree are sculpted behind the head of the Buddha, as if he was sitting under the *Ashvattha* tree. Invariably he is sitting on a lotus pedestal surrounded by *Bodhisattvas* or *gandharvas* carrying garlands as offerings. The *Dharma chakra*, the wheel of law set in motion by the Buddha is also sculpted on the pedestal with the forest animals sculpted below it as if listening to the Master's discourse.

J.N. Banerjea comments on the depiction of the *Ashvattha* tree, 'The association of the *Ashvattha* tree with Sakyamuni Buddha and that of the various other trees like *Pundarika*, *Sirisha*, *Patali*, *Nyagrodha* and others with his predecessors was not only the special feature of the Buddhist creed alone, these Bodhi trees were the direct descendants of the *chaitya vrikshas* (*rukkhacetiyani*) of more primitive times. The trees and branches appearing so frequently on the numerous seals discovered in the Indus valley had most probably some cult significance of this character.<sup>110</sup>

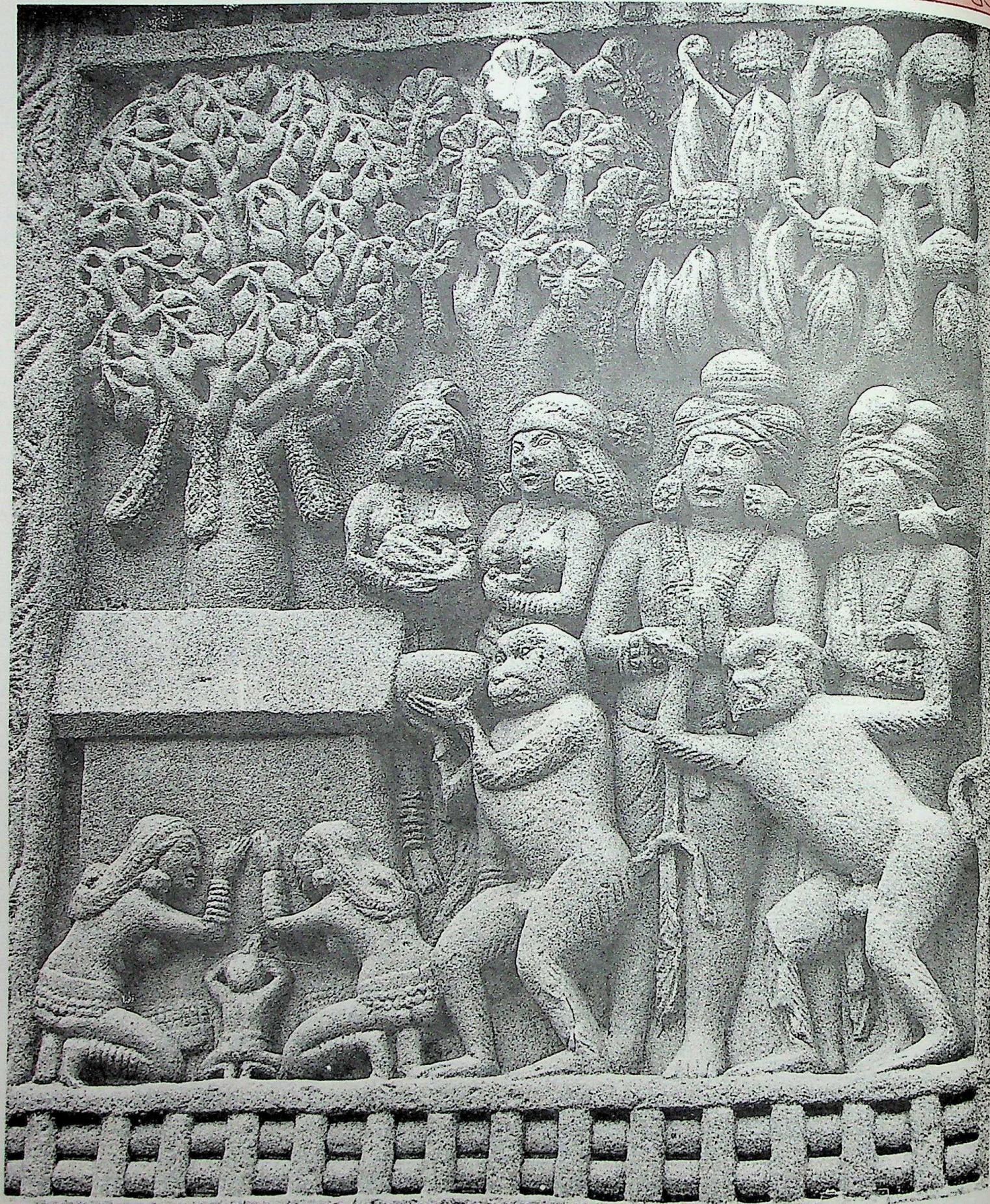


Plate No. 99

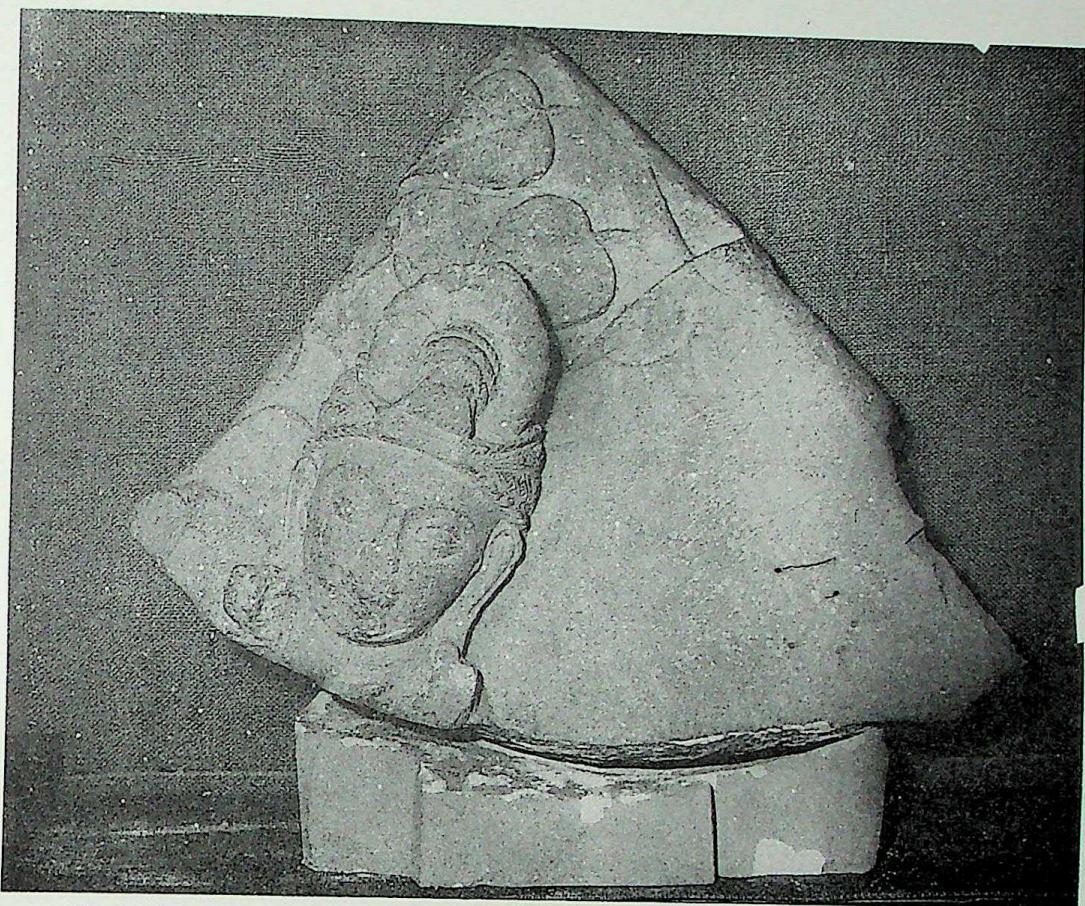


Plate No. 100

Before the worship of Buddha in the anthropomorphic form started, he was symbolically worshipped as a throne or a seat under the *Ashvattha* tree (pls.97,98,99). In plate 97, *Ashvattha* tree is in the middle with floral garlands hanging on it and a stone platform below it, on which offerings of flowers and fruits are laid. Men and women are worshipping the tree. In plate 98 also from Bharhut, there is a tree of *Ashvattha* being worshipped by Guardians of the four quarters. At the upper end they are riding their elephants and at the lower right end of the panel, having alighted from their mounts they are worshipping the *Ashvattha* tree. In plate 99, from Sanchi, the monkeys are offering honey to the *Ashvattha* tree symbolically the Buddha, and men and women are worshipping the tree. Next to the *Bodhi* tree, on the upper side, are trees of *Saptaparni* with garlands hanging on them, and a flowering *Kadamba* tree. A very graphic depiction of the *Ashvattha* tree branch showing the leaves with visible veins on the leaves (pl.100), sculpted behind the head of a *Chauri* bearer, is from Mathura.

Two panels from Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh 1st century A.D. depicting the worship of the *Ashvattha* tree symbolically as the Buddha, are worth mentioning. In plate 101, the tree is being symbolically worshipped as the Buddha. In spite of the corroding of the stone due to age, the tree is unmistakably of *Ashvattha* and the leaves are clearly of the *Bodhi* tree. In plate 102, a *Vihara* is constructed around the *Vrkshachaitya*. Flying *gandharvas* are seen on both sides of the *Bodhi* tree and garlands as offerings are hanging on it.

*Ashvattha* leaf is sometimes used as a decorative motif on pillars and walls of temples as in Vijayanagar, Hampi, 1336 A.D.

This tree is sacred to *Vaishnavi*, the consort or female energy, or *Shakti* of Vishnu.<sup>111</sup>

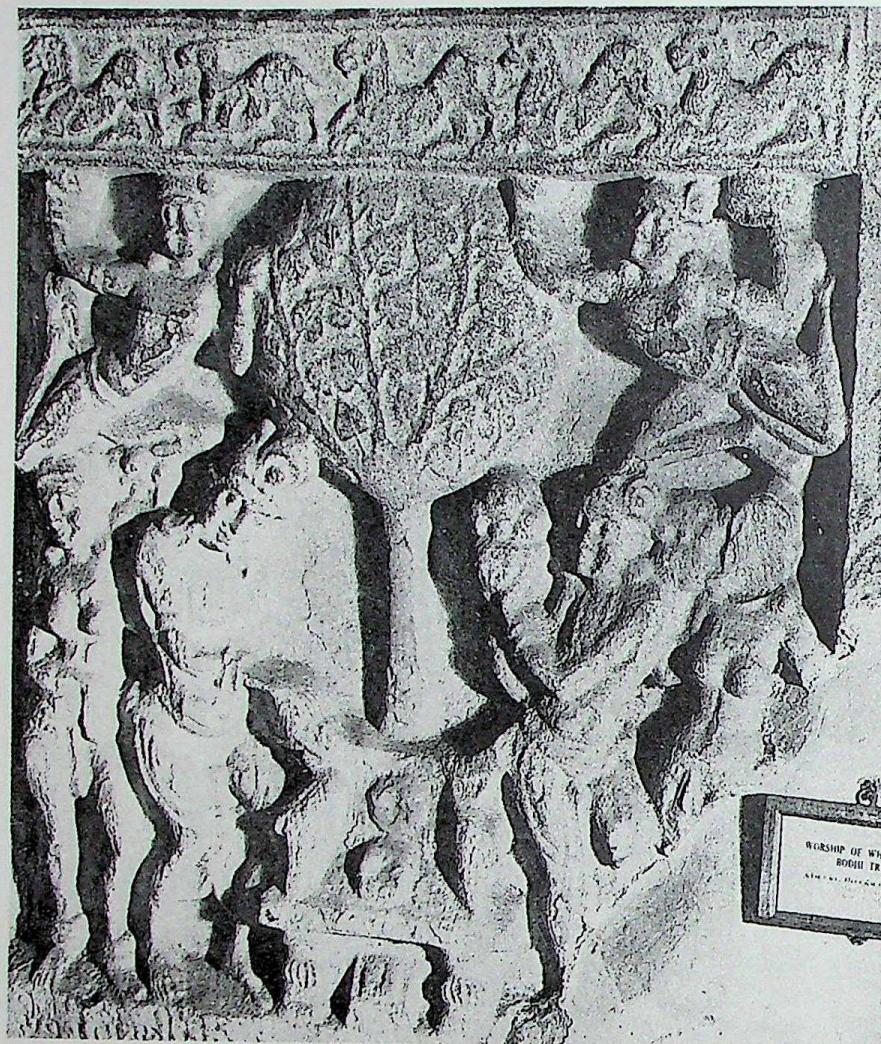


Plate No. 101



Plate No. 102

## GLOCHIDION VELUTINUM

Wight

Glochidion, known as *Partiza* in Maharashtra is a small or moderate-sized tree found in deciduous forests throughout the greater part of India, ascending to an altitude of 1,215m. in the hills. Its leaves are oblong-elliptic or oblong-obovate, densely pubescent, with shortly acuminate apex. The flowers are monoecious and axillary. The perianth segments are six, rarely 5 or 4, free or shortly united.

In plate 103, a *vrikshaka* is standing under the Glochidion tree on a prone figure (may be a dwarf). Her legs are crossed and with her right hand she is holding the ratnopavita. She is naked except for wearing jewellery such as anklets, jewelled waist girdle (*mehkala*), necklace, a large number of bangles on her arms, fish-shaped earrings and a peculiar head dress resembling a turban. Another panel depicts a *vrikshaka* standing cross-legged on a prone male figure, under the Glochidion tree in the *tribhanga* style. Her left hand is holding a flowering branch of the tree and in her right hand, she holds a goblet of wine. She also is heavily jewelled, naked except for a loosely tied waist band, the ends of which are hanging on either side. In yet another panel with the same plant motif, a woman stands under a tree with her hands folded in *anjali*. Like the other two figures, she is also wearing heavy anklets, a *mehkala*, bangles, necklaces and unusually heavy ear-rings. She is also naked except for a shawl or a drapery which hangs from her shoulders on either side, not covering her nakedness. All the three figures are standing under the tree of *Glochidion velutinum*, the branching, leaves with clear venation and flowers arising on the stem in a row are all characteristic of the plant.

It is interesting to note that all the three panels are from Mathura or its vicinity.

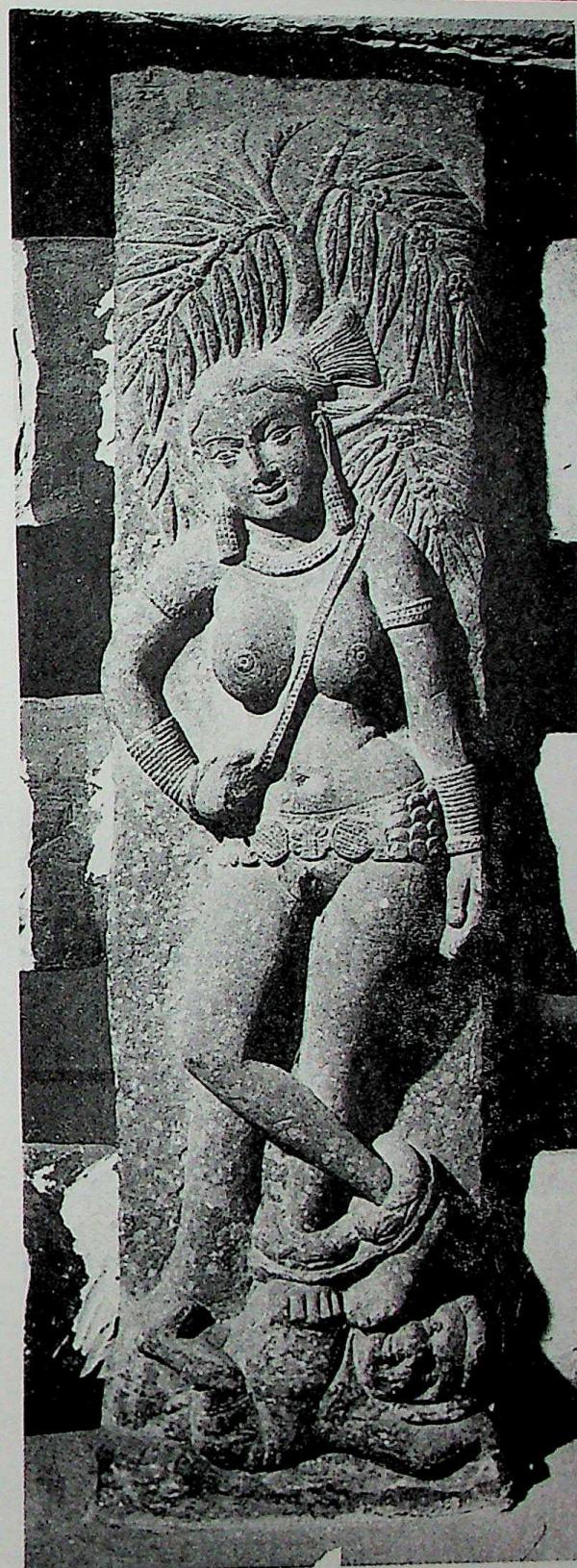


Plate No. 103

## HELIANTHUS ANNUUS Linn.

Sunflower plant is an erect, ornamental, annual herb, 5-6 m. high with rough hairy stems and long, alternate, stalked leaves which are broadly ovate-cordate and coarsely toothed. Flower heads are up to 80 cms. in width, single or double on the terminal main axis. Genus *Helianthus* is a native of Central and South America mainly Mexico but is cultivated in India from very early times which fact is proved by a graphic depiction of the plant in flower in the Rani Gumpha cave, Udaigiri, 2nd century B.C. (pl.29). The panel shows a hunting scene, a man shooting an arrow at a deer and another man standing with his bow. A king is on the left of the panel riding a horse held by the horseman. On the extreme right is a tree of Bread fruit and a woman out of fear has climbed it. Deer are seen running away out of fear. The Sunflower plant with five large capitula can be seen on the right of the hunter. The variety of the sunflower floral heads depicted is of the large type where the plant reaches a height of 5-6 metres and the capitula have a circumference up to 80 cms.

In plate 104, the panel from Sanchi shows a bunch of Sunflower capitula or some other member of the same family which resembles Sunflower present between two mythical animals. The capitula appear to be of *Helianthus* and the panel is purely decorative.

One of the best depictions of the Sunflower capitula is from Sanchi (pl.222), showing a pastoral scene with parrots, buffaloes, mango tree, grapes, *kadamba* tree and on extreme left are three large capitula of Sunflower.



*Helianthus annuus linn.*

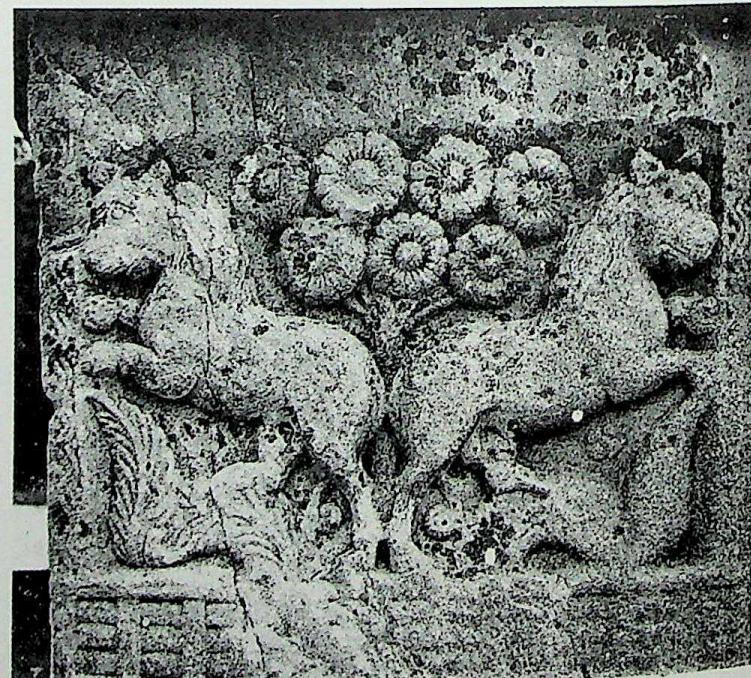


Plate No. 104



Plate No. 105



Plate No. 106

### **JASMINUM SAMBAC (Linn.) Ait.**

Jasmine is a scandent or sub-erect shrub found throughout India but is mostly cultivated. Its flowers are white and fragrant, solitary or in 3-flowered terminal cymes. In India the flowers are used from ancient times in garlands, bouquets and for religious offerings.

Plate 105 shows Prince Siddhartha Gautama holding a bunch of Jasmine flowers. The reason for considering these as Jasmine flowers is that apart from the resemblance of the real flowers to those sculpted here, there is also the fact that these flowers could not be of Magnolia to which they have superficial resemblance. Magnolia flowers are large and a bunch of them would be too big to hold in the hand. The inner whorl of unopened petals of the Jasmine flowers no doubt has a superficial resemblance to the gynophore of Magnolia flower but that is where the resemblance ends. Magnolia flowers are solitary and Jasmine flowers are in a bunch. The flowers here are not solitary. Jasmine flowers with the inner unopened petals are also sculpted at Avadayarkovil Shiva temple in Tamil Nadu where though the flower is identifiable, the rest of the plant is stylised.

### **KIGELIA AFRICANA (PINNATA) DC**

The Sausage tree is medium sized spreading tree of rapid growth with a short trunk and long distorted branches. It is an ornamental tree with large reddish-maroon coloured flowers, imparipinnate leaves and long sausage or gourd-like fruits on hanging peduncles. The fruit has many seeds embedded in its fibrous pulp.

The depiction seen of this fruit is sculpted on the Kedareshwar temple, Halebid, Karnataka, two monkeys carrying the fruit (pl.106). The depiction of the fruit is very clear. The sculpture resembles the fruit of *Kigelia*

*africana (pinnata)*, popularly known as the Sausage tree, except that the sculpted fruit appears to have a persistent calyx like structure. Neither the fruit of the Sausage tree nor the gourd to which the sculpted fruit resembles has a persistent calyx. It could have been added by the sculptor on his own.

The Sausage tree is a native of Africa, a purely ornamental tree planted as an Avenue tree and thrives well on the Indian soil.

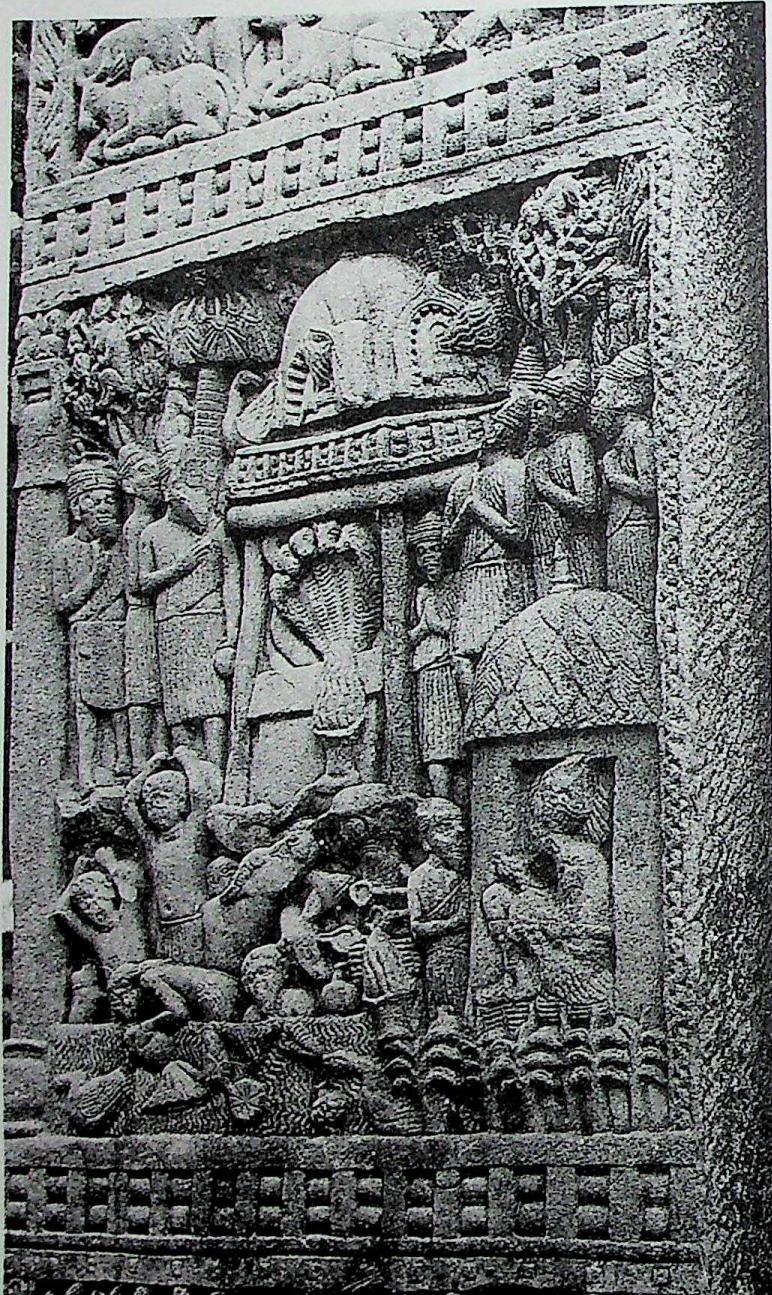


Plate No. 107

### LIVISTONA CHINENSIS R.Br.

The Fan Palm, a native of China has an erect, columnar trunk with horizontal markings. Its leaves are orbicular, borne on spreading and decurved petioles and has globose fruit.

The Fan Palm is sculpted on Sanchi *Stupas* even though the palm does not grow in the vicinity of the *stupas*. And is also not found sculpted on temples elsewhere in the country. The depiction of Fan Palm on the Sanchi *stupas* is difficult to explain as it does not grow in the wild state in India and being a native of China, it could not have been familiar to the Indian artists of the Sanchi *stupas*. Its depiction adds to the forest flora depicted extensively on the Sanchi *stupas*, no doubt a part of the cult of tree worship prevalent at that time. Plate 107 shows a temple scene, a *naga* being worshipped. Below the temple, young boys are bathing in a pool in which lotuses are growing. Plantain plants can be seen on the lower right-hand corner above which is a hermit in his thatched hut. On the right side of the temple is a mango tree and on the left, a tree of Livistona palm with its semi-orbicular leaves and columnar tree trunk with horizontal markings. But for the Fan palm trees, this scene could be from any village in India at present. Plate 108 shows another pastoral scene depicting a tree of the Fan palm growing in a row above a Group of men and women.

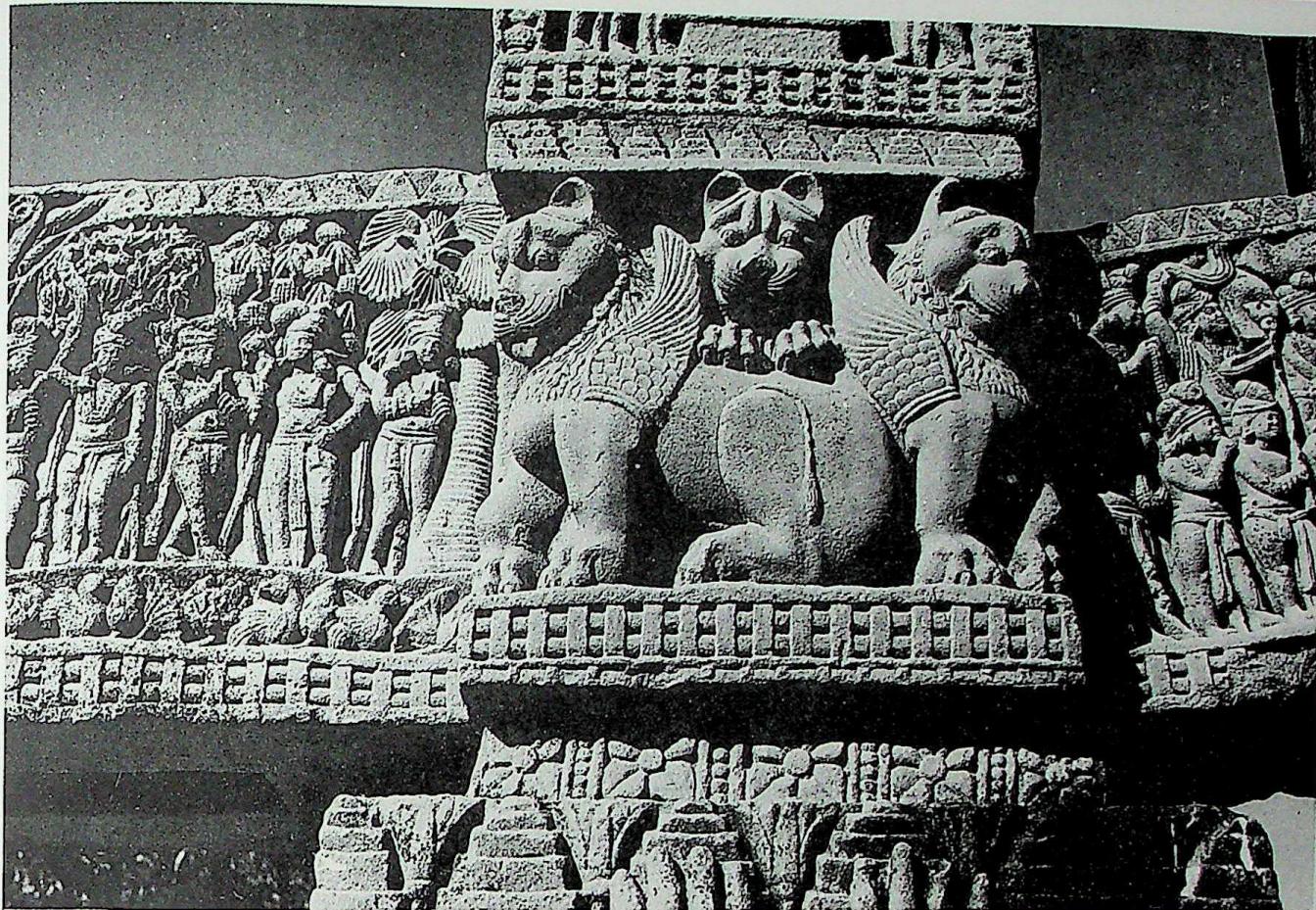


Plate No. 108

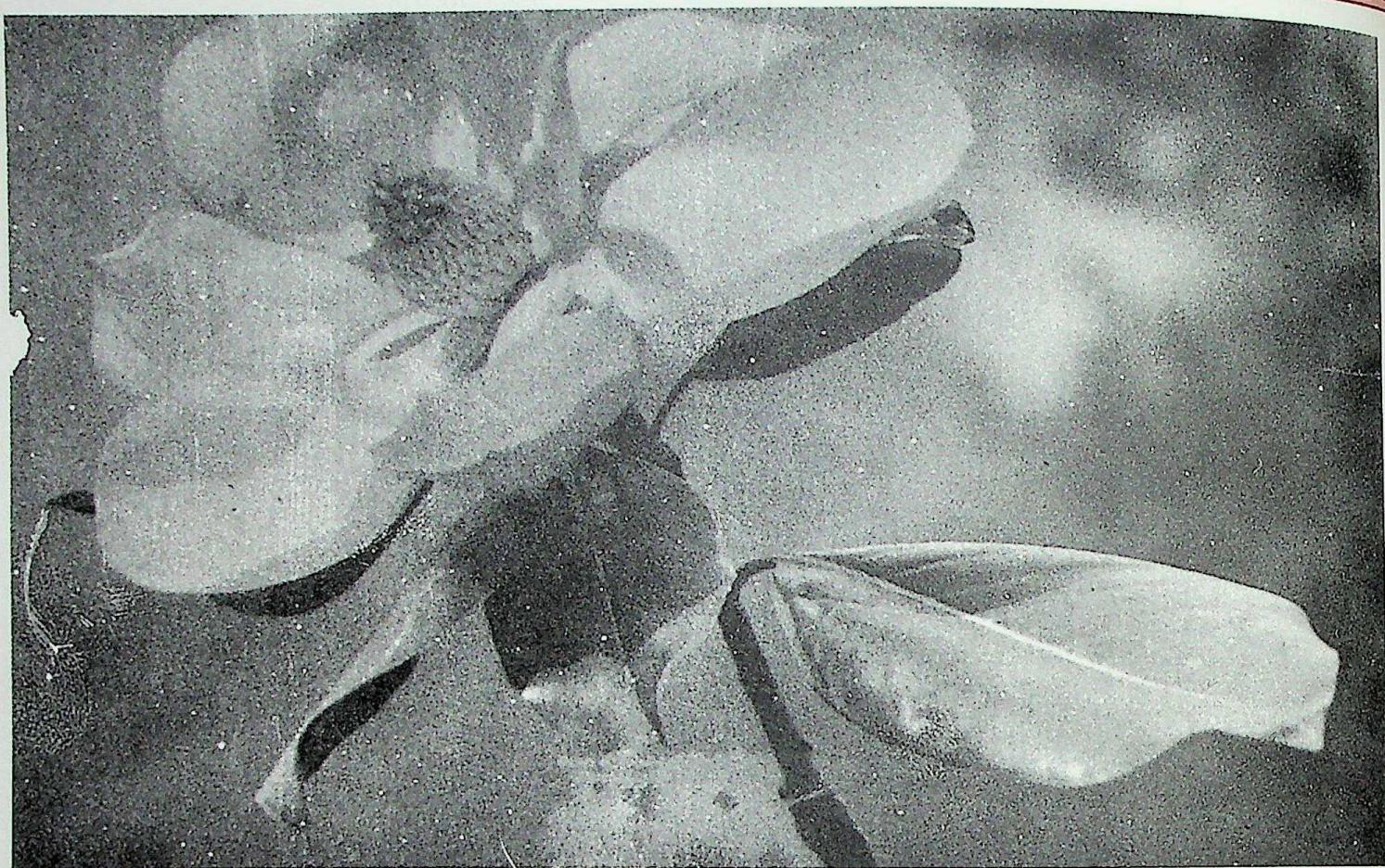
### MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA Linn./MAGNOLIA SOULANGENA Linn.

Magnolia, a small-sized tree, is native of North and Central America and cultivated in India, China and Japan. The tree has large, obovate-oblong or elliptic leaves with waxy creamish-white fragrant flowers in *Magnolia grandiflora* and pink coloured flowers in *Magnolia soulangena* with a prominent gynophore. Whereas the tree is evergreen in *Magnolia grandiflora*, it is deciduous in *Magnolia soulangena*. Neither of the two species are found in the wild state in Madhya Pradesh. It is sculpted on only Buddhist places of worship in Madhya Pradesh.

Magnolia flower was a favourite depiction as seen in pl.109 a medallion from Bharhut which shows a full blown lotus flower in the centre of the medallion with the image of a yaksha in the centre of the lotus flower. On either side of the lotus flower are flowering trees of Magnolia without leaves. The flowers have prominent gynophores. On the lower side of the medallion are capsules of poppy from the centre of which garlands are hanging.

In plate 110, on the extreme left can be seen a group of five flowers of Champa with their unmistakable prominent cone-like gynophores. Since leaves are not depicted on the trees, the representation could be of *Magnolia soulangena* as the tree flowers when no leaves are present and gets covered with flowers in contrast to *Magnolia grandiflora* tree where flowers are solitary and the tree is evergreen with dark coloured large, elliptical leaves. Other floral motifs seen in this panel include Kadamba, Saptaparni, mango and banana plants.

Plate 111 illustrates a story from *Ruru Jataka*. The panel shows a flowering tree of Magnolia along with two trees of Sirisha and capsules of poppy. *Ruru Jataka* illustrates the following story. Bodhisattva was once born as a Ruru deer. With his bright blue eyes and body resplendent with spots of different colours, shining like rubies, sapphires, emeralds and other precious stones, when he moved, he gave the appearance of a moving treasury of



Magnolia grandiflora Linn

jewels. Aware of the pitiless nature of man and knowing that his body was a desirable target for hunters, he avoided places which were unsafe.

Once he heard cries for help uttered by a man who was being carried away by the current of a rapid stream flowing near the forest. The piteous cries of distress struck the *Bodhisattva* and forgetting the risk to his life, he rushed to the rescue of that man. In the form of a golden deer, he entered the river that was swollen with rain and rescued the drowning man. In the meanwhile, the queen of that country had a dream in which she saw a jewelled deer standing on a throne. She told her dream to the King, and requested him to get the jewelled deer for her. The King, who by experience trusted the vision of her dreams, readily complied with her desire and ordered all his huntsmen to search for that deer. The man who was rescued by the *Bodhisattva* in the form of the Ruru deer, also heard the proclamation and decided to disclose the whereabouts of the Ruru deer. The deer was made captive by the King's men and brought to court. The King realised who the deer was and invited him to mount the royal chariot. Standing in the chariot, the *Bodhisattva* raised his voice and preached the Law to the King and his royal assembly, in human words. The King acted on the Law of Righteousness and granted security to all quadrates and birds.<sup>112</sup>

Members of the Family Magnoliaceae have beautiful large flowers and appear to have been a great favourite for temple ornamentation from circa 1st to 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. Though leaves are present when the tree flowers, the depiction of the tree usually does not have any leaves sculpted. Plate 112 shows a typical woman and tree motif theme, where the *vrikshaka* is nude except for the jewellery she is wearing particularly the jewelled girdle (*Mekhala*). She stands in the *tribhanga* style with her legs crossed, one hand holding the flowering tree branch and the second on her hips. The flowers depicted in the panel are of *Champa* with their prominent central gynophores.



Plate No. 109

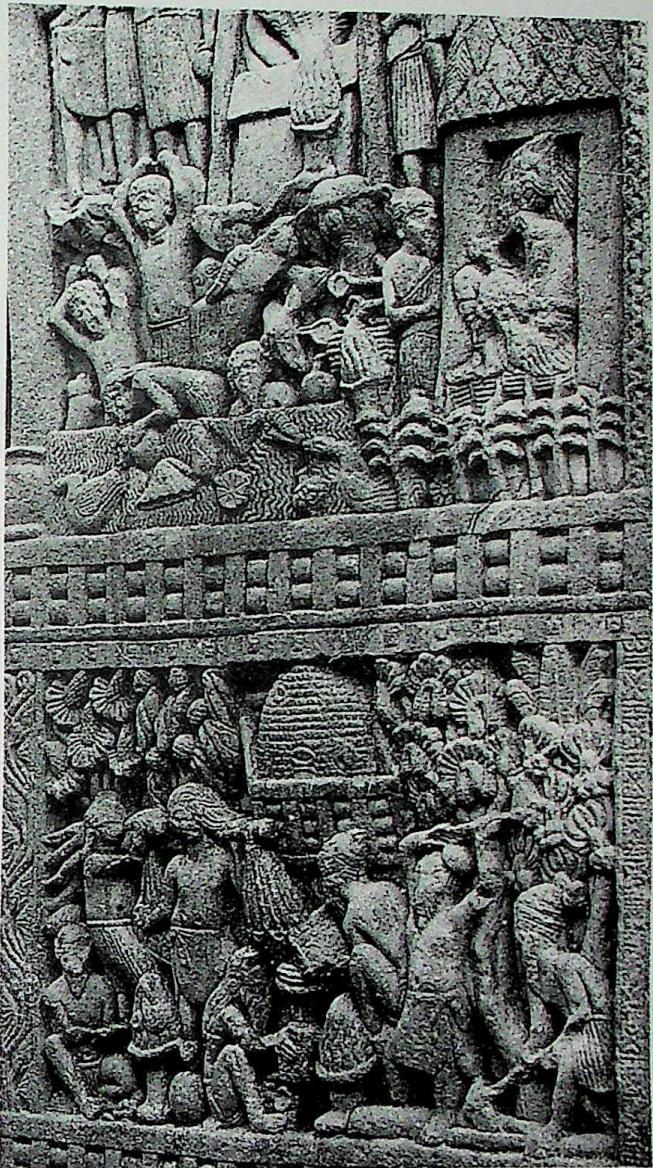


Plate No. 110

Plate 113 shows a woman carrying a plate full of food in her left hand and a pot containing perhaps a drink in her right hand. She is standing under a tree of *Champa*. These trees probably were earlier found in the mixed evergreen forests of Madhya Pradesh but at present they are not even found in the vicinity of shrines where they are sculpted. Kalidasa has mentioned in the *Raghuvamsa* about a maiden passing through a forest of *Champa* trees carrying articles of toilet for her mistress.<sup>122</sup>

The flowers of *Champa* are heavily scented and held sacred. They are offered in worship to deities except Shiva. *Shiva Purana* mentions that they are not to be offered to him.<sup>123</sup>

From the sculptures it is difficult to ascertain the species of the Magnolia flower. It is important to note that *Champa* is the common name of more than one type of flower.

Plate No. 111

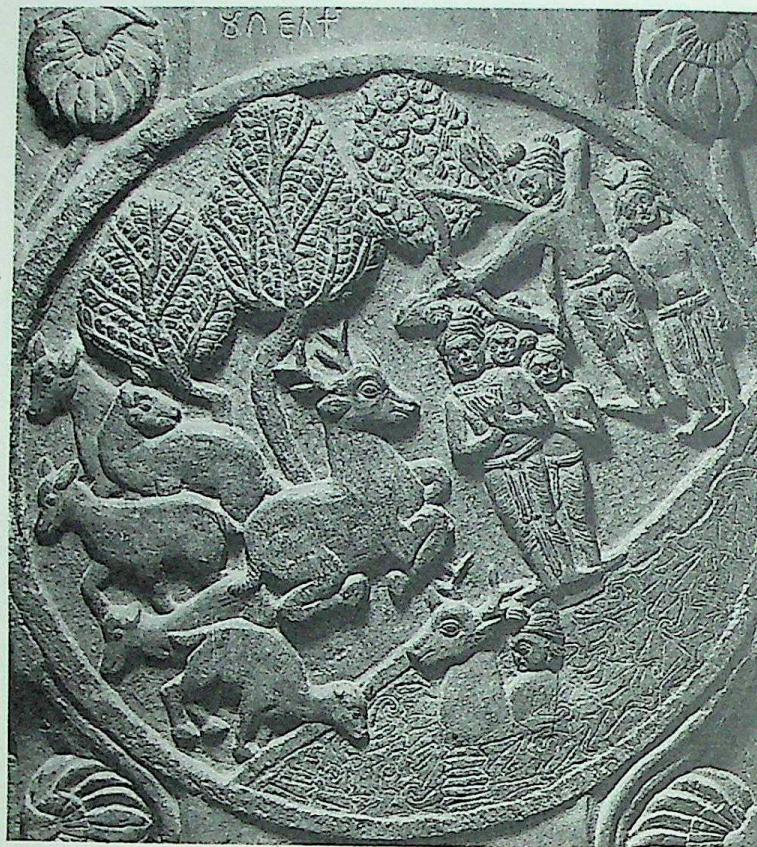
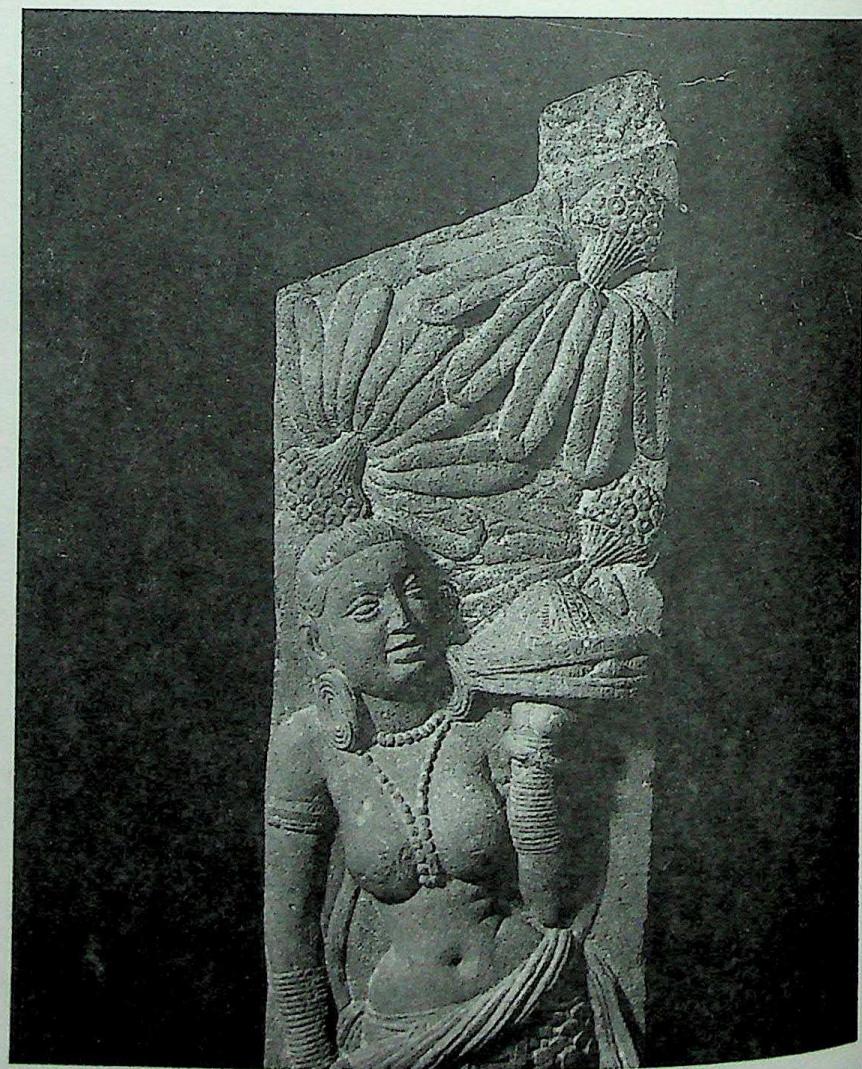


Plate No. 112



Plate No. 113





*Mangifera indica Linn.*

### **MANGIFERA INDICA Linn.**

The mango tree is a large-sized evergreen tree cultivated for its fruit which has approximately 700 varieties. Its leaves are simple, linear-oblong or elliptic-lanceolate. The tree probably originated in the Assam-Burma-Thailand region and has been cultivated in India for at least 4,000 years. It is a tree of very great economic importance. It flowers from March to April in North India and December-January in South India and fruits from April to July.

The tree, particularly its fruit is sacred to Hindus, Jains and Buddhists and is, therefore, profusely depicted on temples. A large number of deities are shown sitting under the mango tree. Its leaves are festooned on the doorways on auspicious occasions and its wood is used for fire oblations.

Leaves of the mango tree crowd at the end of a branch giving a rosette like effect particularly when viewed from a distance. Most sculptures of the mango fruits give the impression as if the fruits are arising from the centre of a rosette of leaves. The large variety of mangoes depicted on temples vary from a round mango to a beaked one, an elongated mango to an oval-shaped one, short-stalked to a long-stalked one, single mango depiction to a bunch of mangoes, mangoes growing on the tree, mangoes in the hands of deities etc.

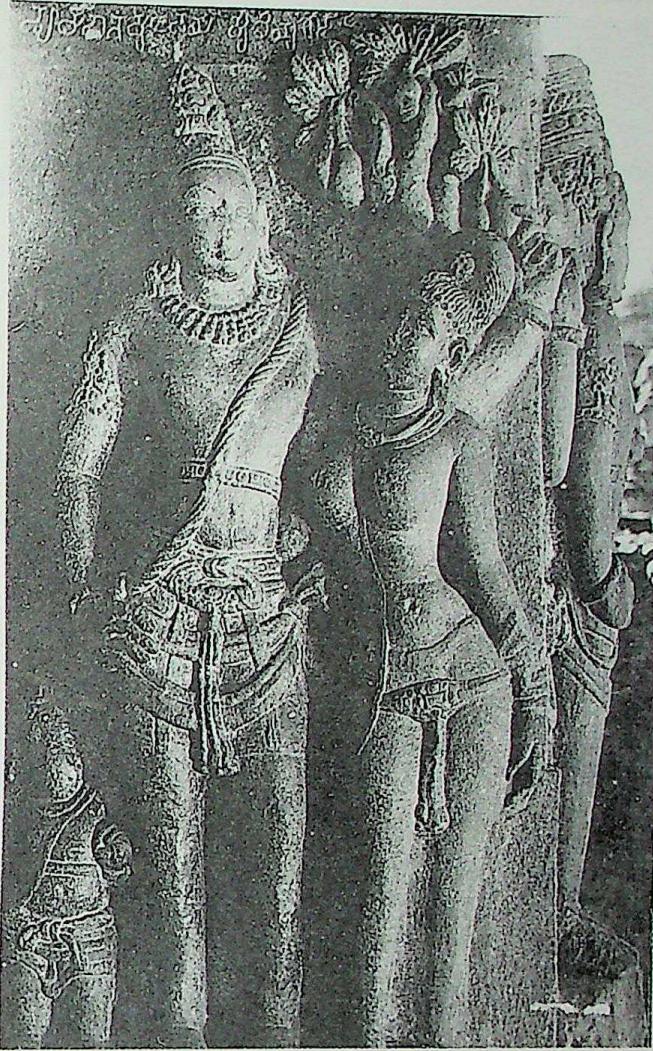
According to tradition, when a son is born, mango leaves are festooned on doorways to announce the birth. In villages there is a strong belief that when a son is born, mango tree puts forth fresh copper-red leaves. In fact the mango tree puts out fresh leaves which are copper-red in colour during the spring season, which time incidentally coincides with the birth of a large number of babies. The reason is obvious. During the hot summer months, the vast population of India sleeps outdoors. On the advent of the monsoons, people start sleeping inside and 9-10 months later, the babies start arriving and with that the festooning of the mango leaves in the doorways. This form of festooning mango leaves in the doorways is sculpted on Lakshmana temple, Khajuraho (pl.114).





Plate No. 115

Plate No. 116



At Tiruchendur Murugan temple in Tamil Nadu, the mango tree with large mangoes growing on it is shown growing upside down in the midst of the ocean. According to the temple legend, *asura* Surapadma took the form of an upside down mango tree and came to attack Murugan but was killed by Murugan with a spear.

Mango tree is associated with the marriage of Shiva and Parvati. According to the Ekambareswar temple legend, Shiva and Parvati quarrelled over a game of dice. Shiva having been defeated, cursed Parvati to become black in complexion, have misshapen eyes, i.e., three-eyed and a terrifying look. Devi (Parvati) worshipped her brother Vishnu in his Vamana form at Kanchipuram and he made her eyes beautiful and gave her the name Kamakshi, the one with beautiful eyes. On Vishnu's advice, she built a *lingam* of sand and worshipped it so that Shiva might marry her. While she was worshipping, Shiva came to visit her but had the fierce heat of the Sun. Parvati again called upon her brother for help and he created a mango tree to shade his sister, but Shiva burnt both the tree and Parvati with one glance. Vishnu cooled her with rays of nectar emitting from his moon-form (*purnacandrakrit*). He also created a lake full of nectar and asked her to bathe in it. The mango tree although burnt, grew and bore fruit because of the cooling effect of the lake and Devi created the sand-*lingam* at its base and worshipped Shiva.<sup>113</sup> Since that time the *Sthalavriksha* of Ekambareswar temple, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, is the mango tree. The present tree is no doubt very old and its four main branches

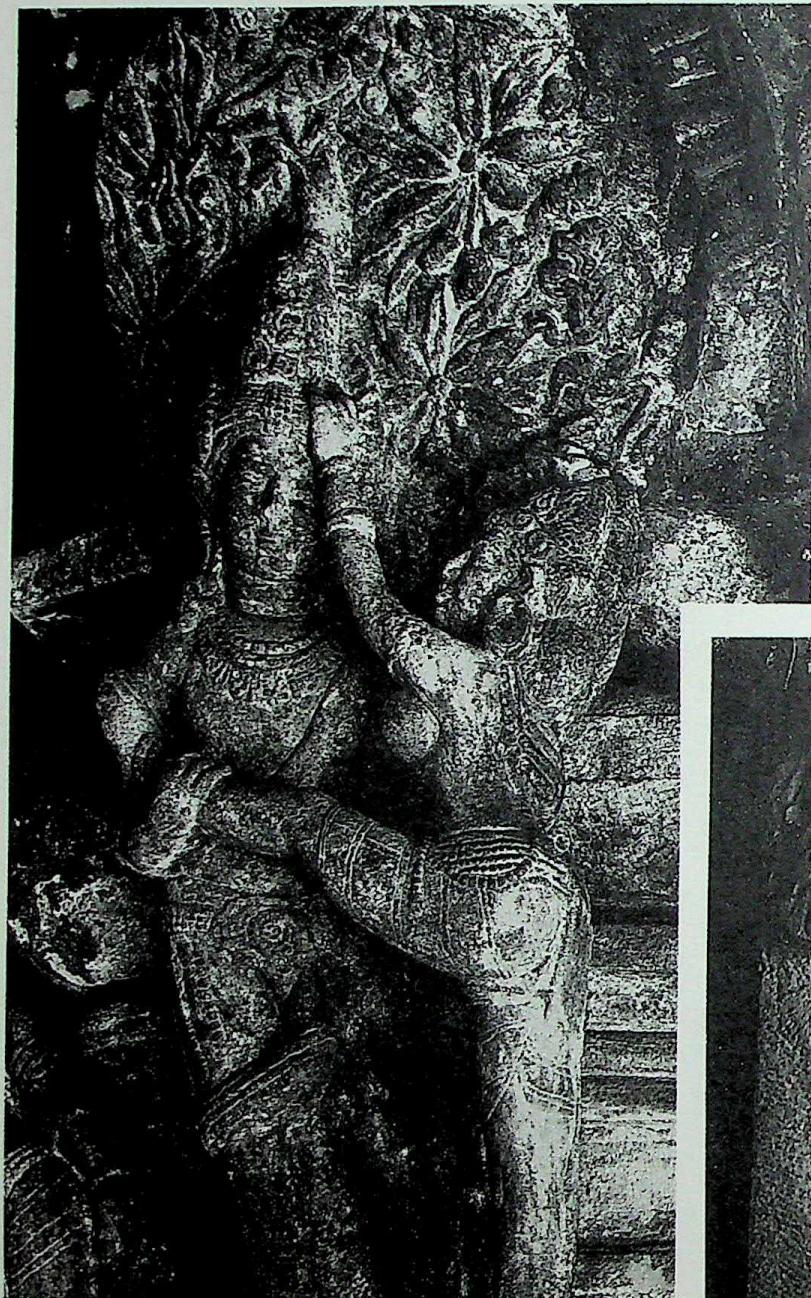


Plate No. 117

Plate No. 118



bear four different varieties of mangoes. Very likely, four graftings of different varieties would have been done on it. Current belief is that the tree was planted by Parvati 3,500 years ago. Many of the plant motifs at the Ekambareswar temple are of the mango tree.

In *Shiva Purana* mention is made of the penance of Parvati to win Shiva as a husband.<sup>114</sup> Discarding all fine clothes, Parvati clad in tree bark and a girdle of *Munja* grass, performed penance standing on one leg and muttering the 5-syllabled mantra, OM NAMAH SHIVAYA. She did the penance standing between five fires, one on each side of the four directions, north, south, east and west, and the fifth fire was the Sun blazing above (pl.115). The tree motif in this panel is the mango tree with fruits hanging on it. An identical motif is also seen in Ekambareswar temple, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu.

While Parvati was doing penance to win Shiva as a husband, Kamadeva with his arrows tipped with flowers, shot an arrow at Shiva who was at that moment in meditation. Struck by the arrow, Shiva opened his eyes, beheld Parvati doing penance and instantly fell in love with her. When Shiva's eyes fell on Kamadeva, he realised who was the culprit and in anger opened his third eye and burnt Kamadeva for his audacity (pl.187). Kamadeva was revived later.<sup>115</sup>

The mango tree is the tree of *Kama* that was burnt by Shiva. One of the arrows of Kamadeva is tipped with mango flowers, others being the *ashoka* flower, white lotus, blue lotus and jasmine. Sometimes, the white lotus is substituted by *Sirisha* flowers.<sup>116</sup> With his five flower-tipped arrows, Kamadeva strikes the five senses of an individual to make him fall in love. *Chuta*, one of the names of the mango fruit has erotic connotation and is associated with love and fertility. That is perhaps why lovers are often depicted under the mango tree (pls.116, 117).

For the worship of the *lingam*, bunches of mango leaves along with *Darbha* ghas are placed in eight pots filled with water and purified with the recitation of mantras.<sup>117</sup>

In most Jain temples, figures of Ambika, a Jain deity is found. She is invariably accompanied by a child, usually sitting on her lap or astride her hip. Ambika is always shown sitting or standing under the mango tree, sometimes with a bunch of mangoes in



Plate No. 119

Plate No. 120



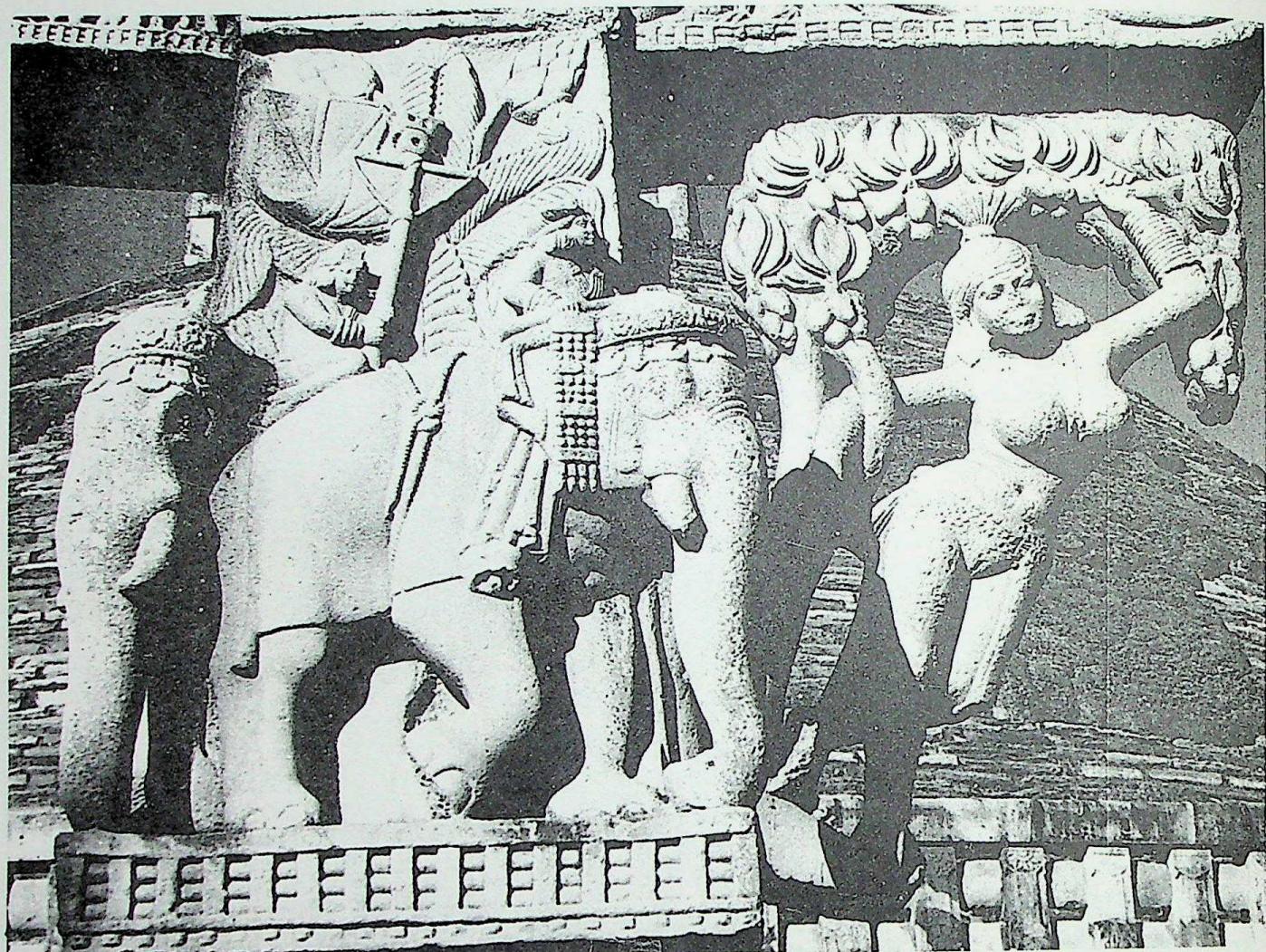


Plate No. 121

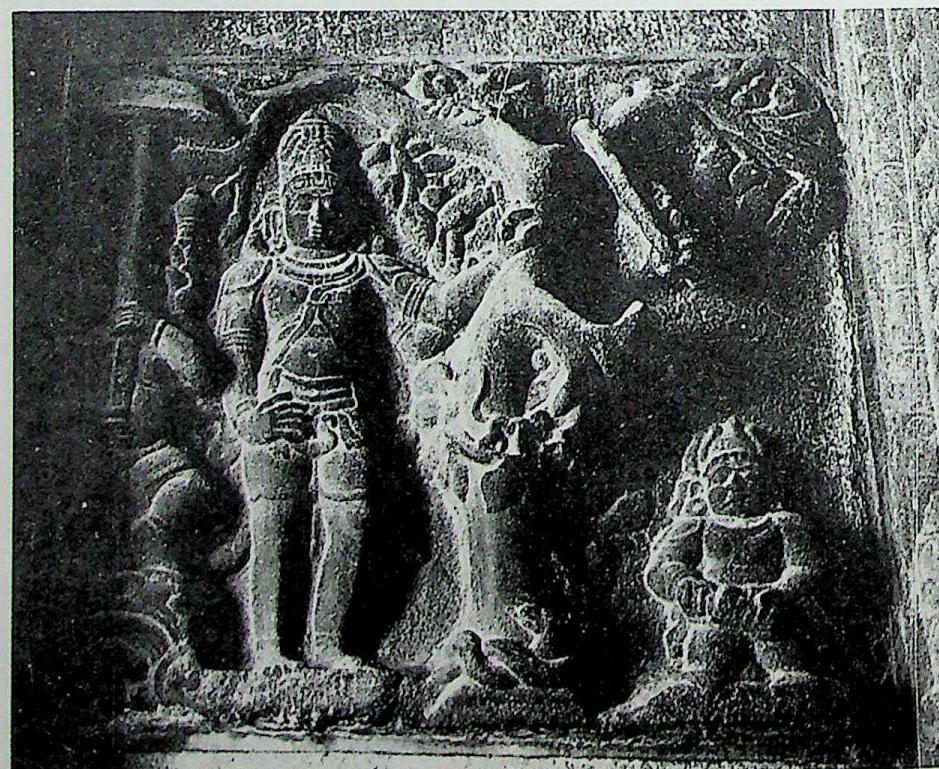


Plate No. 122

*Plants in Indian Temple Art*

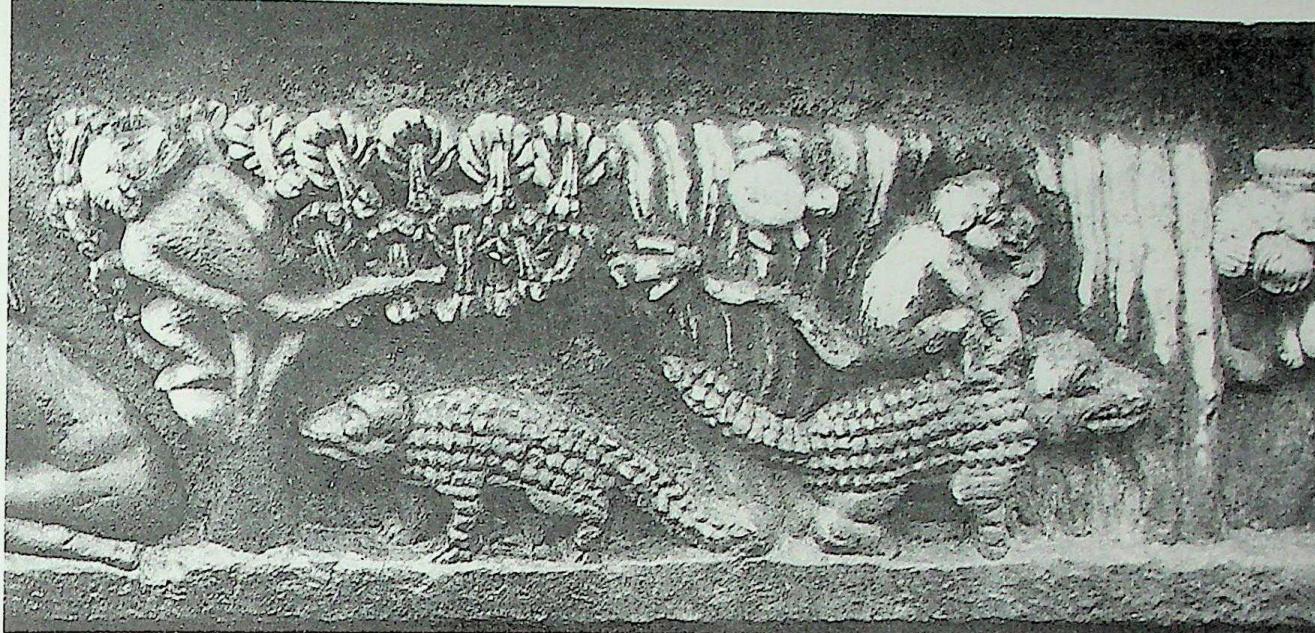


Plate No. 123

her hand (pls.118, 120). Pl.119 from Abaneri, Rajasthan shows a man and a woman sitting on separate seats under a mango tree from which are hanging bunches of mangoes. The man is listening to music, while the woman is playing on a musical instrument with four musicians as accompanists. Mango tree is one of the favourite trees with a *Vrikshaka* standing under it (pl.121).

In the Trimurti temple, Suchindrum; a panel at the entrance *gopuram* shows a mango tree on one side of which a sculpture of Vishnu is present in a standing posture and Garuda in the sitting position on the other side of the mango tree. A snake is coiled at the base of the tree trunk. According to a legend, Garuda, the mount of Vishnu was the enemy of snakes because it was due to them that his mother Vinata had to become a slave of Kadru, the mother of snakes, and, therefore he used to kill them indiscriminately. Fearing that the race of serpents would become extinct, Garuda was promised one snake a day for his meals and it was decided that the snake would be left at the base of a tree (pl.122).

Plate 123 depicts a *Panchtantra* story. A monkey lived on a mango tree growing on the banks of a river in which lived a crocodile. The monkey would throw mangoes to the crocodile everyday and this started a friendship between the two. One day, the crocodile took the mangoes for his wife. The mangoes were very sweet and delicious and his wife said that if the monkey had such sweet mangoes, his heart must be even sweeter and desired to eat his heart. The crocodile was reluctant to betray his friend, but his wife persuaded him to fetch him. The crocodile swam to the mango tree and on the pretext that his wife wanted to meet him and reciprocate the hospitality, asked the monkey to accompany him. The monkey jumped on the back of the crocodile and the two started on their way to meet the wife of the crocodile. In mid-stream the crocodile disclosed his wife's plans of eating the heart of the monkey. But the shrewd monkey said that since he was not told of it earlier, he had left his heart on the mango tree and requested the crocodile to take him back so that he could retrieve his heart for his wife. The stupid crocodile did as suggested and swam back to the mango tree. On reaching the bank of the river, the monkey jumped off the back of the crocodile and quickly climbed the mango tree and thus saved his life. He shouted at the crocodile and said, "You ungrateful creature, I gave you sweet mangoes to eat and this is how you repay my generosity?"<sup>118</sup> In the story, the tree is of rose apple (*Syzygium jambos* Linn.) the fruits of which are edible but tasteless.

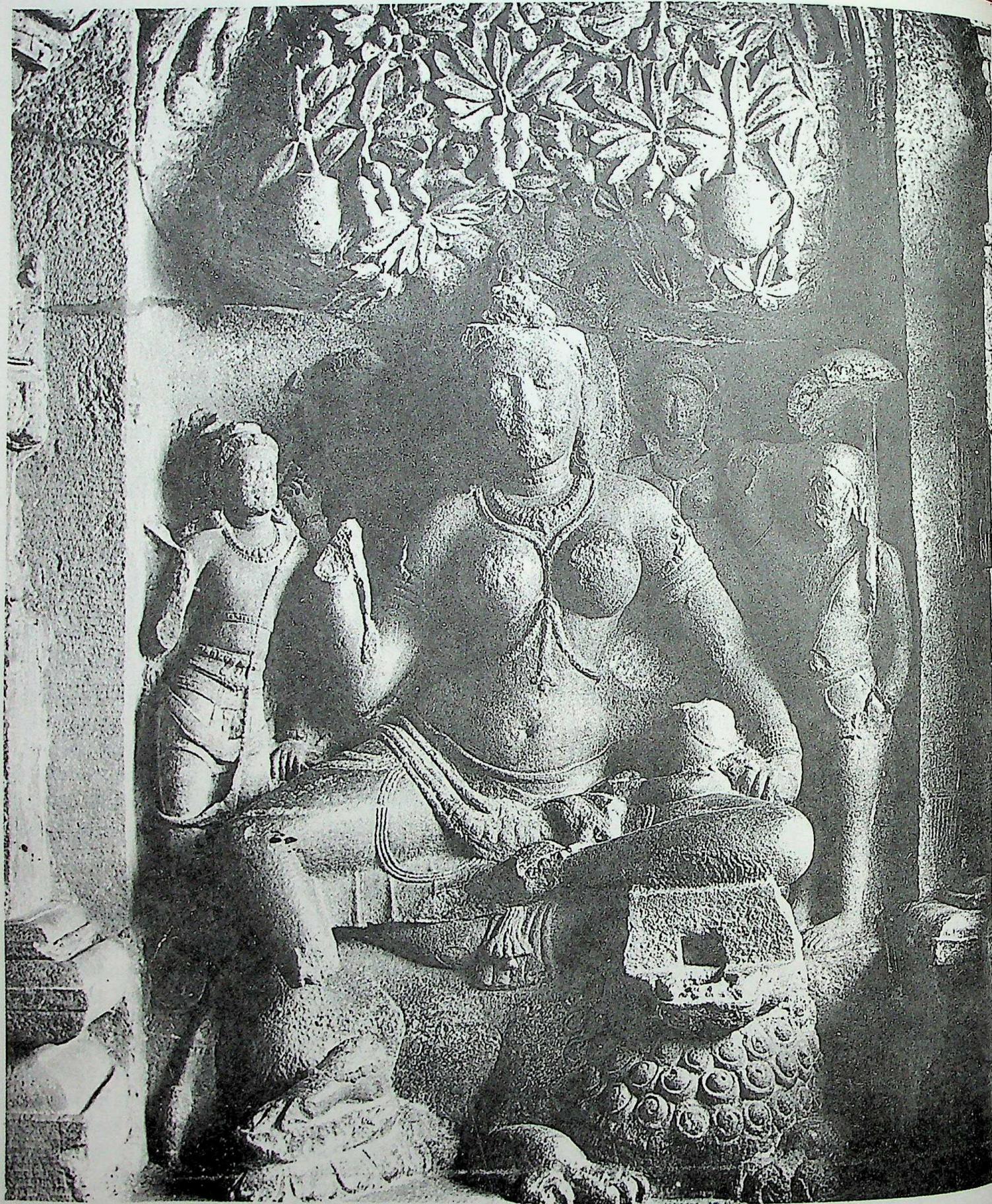


Plate No. 124

A large number of deities such as Ambika, Indrani, Ganesha, Revanta and others either hold the mango fruit in their hands or they are sculpted under a mango tree (pls. 124, 125, 126). On Chennakeshvara temple, Belur, a lady is depicted holding a mango fruit (pl.127). Some Indologists have described the fruit as a citron. Whereas the mango fruit has a smooth skin as depicted in this sculpture, the citron fruit has definite markings on it (see pls.59, 60). Also there is no variety of the citrus fruit which has a beaked shape. This is in fact the mango fruit, *Bangarupa* variety. It is called *Collector* or *Kilimukhi* variety (parrot-beaked). This variety grows in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It is a medium to large sized, oblong fruit with a necked base and a prominent beak. Its skin is thick, lemon-chrome coloured or mustard yellow with a firm flesh and scanty juice.<sup>119</sup> *Bangarupa* variety of mangoes are found in the hands of various deities but only on the temples of Karnataka.<sup>120</sup>

Mango fruit is also associated with the life of Gautama Buddha. Buddha was presented an orchard of mangoes. According to a legend, when Ananda, his disciple cut the fruit for his master to eat, Buddha asked him to plant the stone of the fruit. Ananda did as directed and afterwards Buddha washed his hands over it and immediately a white mango tree sprang over it bearing flowers and fruits.<sup>121</sup>

In plate 128, the mango tree is being worshipped by the ascetics whereas in plate 129, the kings of the four quarters are visible having arrived on their elephants to worship the Mango tree that sprang up instantly after Buddha washed his

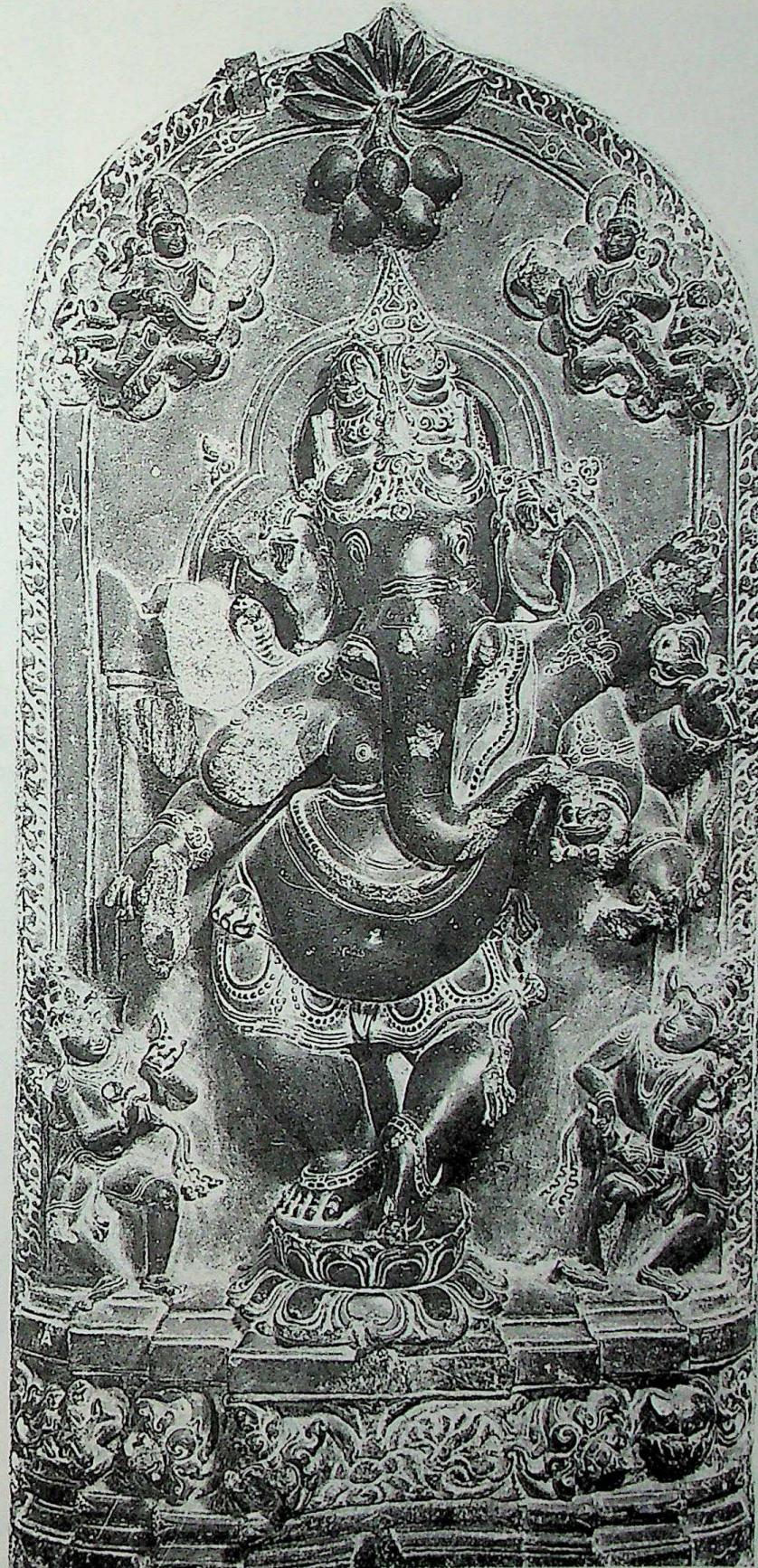


Plate No. 125

Plate No. 126



Plate No. 127

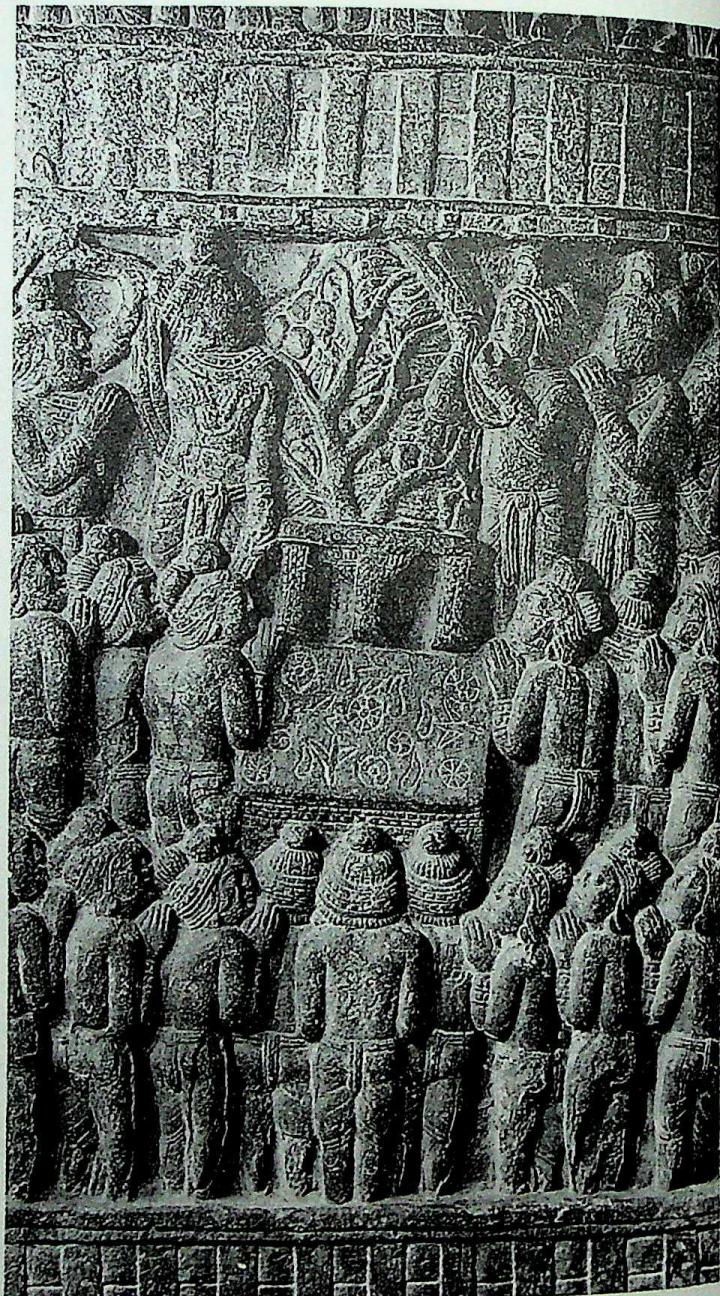


Plate No. 128

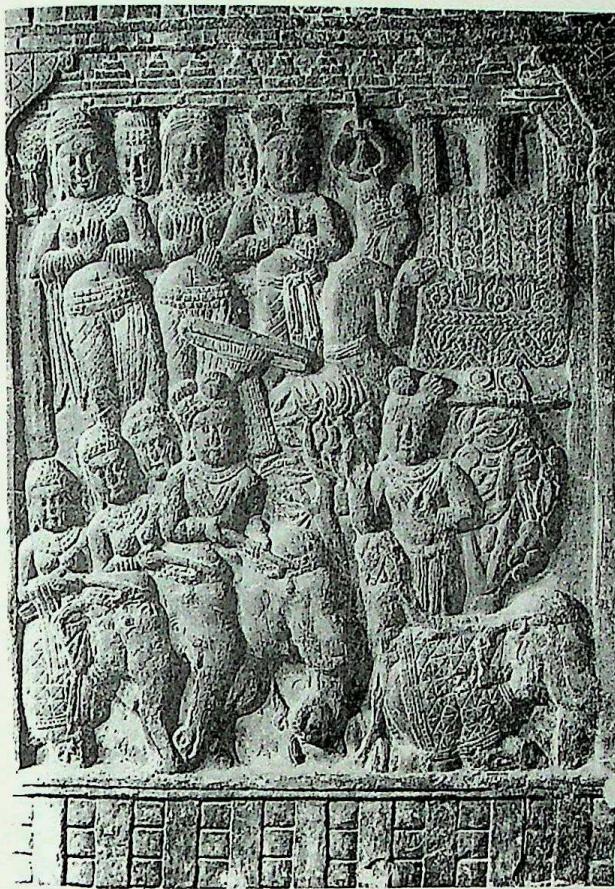


Plate No. 129



Plate No. 130

hands over the stone of the mango fruit. On the upper left corner of the panel, three out of the four kings are present while the fourth king is symbolically worshipping the mango tree, the *Bodhi* tree which is surrounded by an ornate platform.

Three figures on their elephant mounts are seen on the lower left hand corner, a fourth figure is at the back. One figure is standing in front of the Mango tree and his elephant is in front of him. Plate 130 shows the mango tree being worshipped by kings and laymen. The figure behind the mango tree is of the Buddha and the triple ladder denotes the descent of Buddha from heaven, where he had been to preach the law to his mother.

Plate 131 depicts a scene depicting the gift of *Jetavana*. Merchant Anthapindita invited Buddha to visit the town of Sravasti and only the garden of Prince Jeta was worthy to receive the Blessed One. The prince demanded from the merchant as many gold pieces as would cover the garden ground as a price and the merchant agreed to the condition.

In the scene of the *Jetavana* episode, on the right of the medallion, men are seen unloading a bullock cart full of gold pieces and spreading them on the ground. In the centre, the merchant is making a libation to consecrate the gift. The presence of Buddha is indicated by the mango tree encircled by a railing.

Mango tree is commonly depicted on the Buddhist shrines of Sanchi and Bharhut but the best depiction is on the *Kalpavalli*, the wish-fulfilling creeper from Bharhut (pl.132).

Plate No. 131



Plate No. 132





Plate No. 133

### MESUA FERREA Linn.

*Naga Kesara* tree is medium to large-sized, evergreen, found in the Himalayas from Nepal eastwards, north-eastern India, Deccan Peninsula and Andaman islands, lower slopes of the hills in upper Assam, Naga hills, Khasi and Jaintia hills, tropical evergreen rain forests, west coast of Peninsular India, Western Ghats, Konkan, Kerala, Annamalai, Nilgiris. The tree bears lanceolate leaves and four-petalled, large, fragrant white flowers which are either solitary or in clusters of 2-3.

The tree is depicted either as ornamental or in the woman and tree motif theme, but more often as a part of the forest flora, and sometimes as being worshipped. The author has not come across epigraphical evidence regarding religious rituals or legends attached to it in spite of the economic importance of the tree.

The best depiction of the tree is from Bharhut (pl.133) showing Yakshini Candra holding a branch of the *Naga Kesara* tree. The yakshini decked in ornaments has her left arm and leg entwined round the tree trunk and her right hand holds a branch of the flowering tree. A heavily jewelled figure, she wears a pendant in the shape of a custard apple hanging from her *ratnopavita*, the jewelled sacred thread. A flower of *Naga Kesara* is stuck in her hair plaits. This is one of the most beautiful depictions of a *vrikshaka* and an unusual form of the *dohada*.

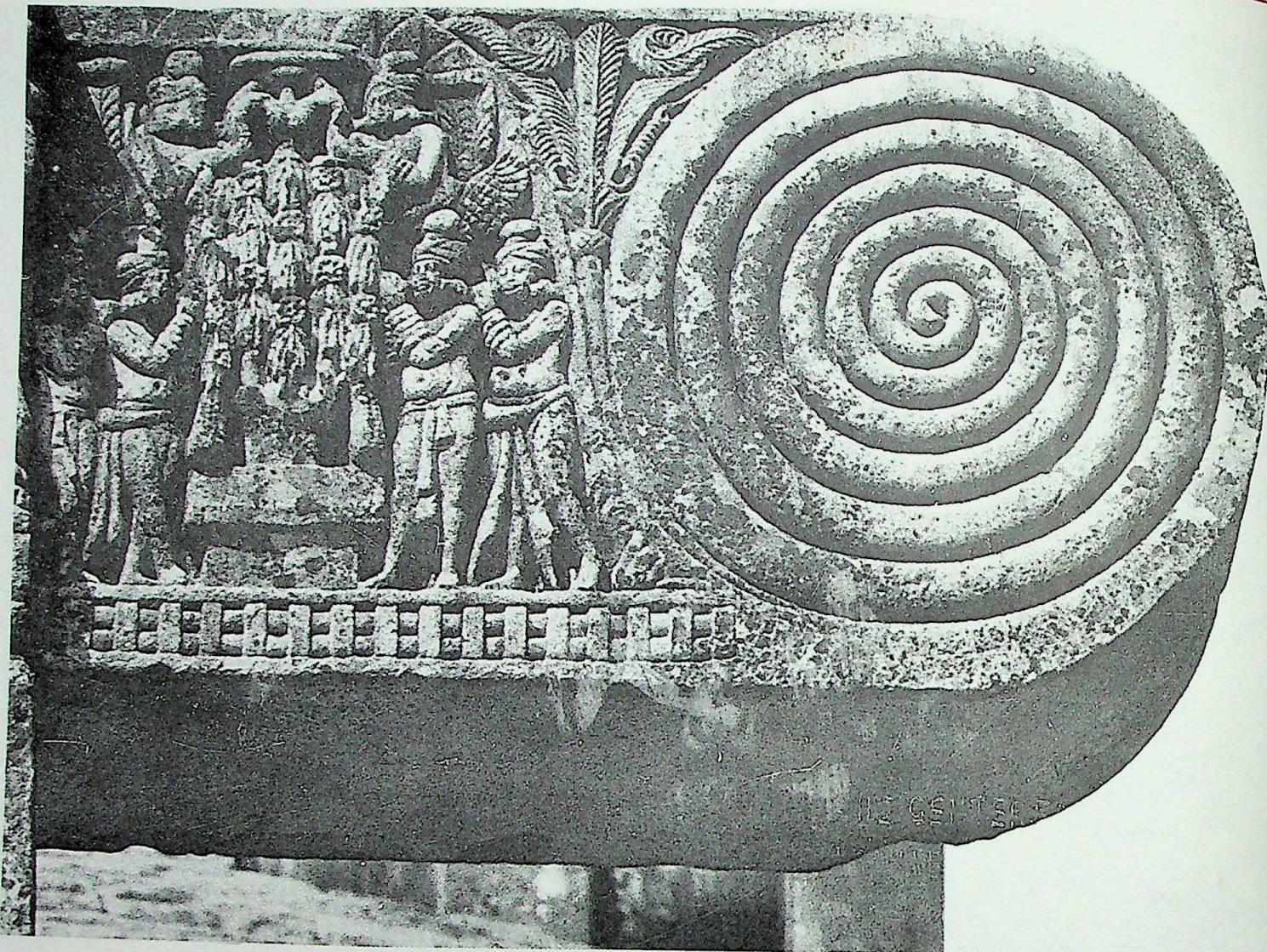


Plate No. 134

longing where instead of kicking the tree trunk to make it flower, the *yakshi* is embracing it. The *Naga Kesar* tree is commonly sculpted on the Sanchi *stupas* as a part of the forest flora (pls.38, 78).

*Naga Kesar* tree is sculpted mainly on the Buddhist *stupas* of Bharhut and Sanchi both of which are in Madhya Pradesh. This could be explained in three ways. First, that there might have been a forest of *Naga Kesar* trees there which has now disappeared due to changing environmental conditions. The second reason can be that the artisans who sculpted these monuments were familiar with the *Naga Kesar* tree and thirdly, that the Buddhist love of trees was responsible for the heavy ornamentation of their *stupas* and while sculpting other trees of the forest, included trees that were not even growing in the vicinity of their *stupas* and *chaityas*. One of the trees sculpted at Sanchi and being worshipped as a *Bodhi* tree or as an abode of a *vanadevata*, is the *Naga Kesar* tree obviously because of the cult of tree worship prevalent at that time (pl.134).

## MIMUSOPS ELENGI Linn.

*Vakula* is a medium-sized evergreen tree with leaves variable in shape from oblong to lanceolate. Its flowers are star-shaped, creamy white in colour and appear from March to July, solitary or in axillary clusters. Fruits are yellow coloured berries when ripe and ripen from January to February.

Das mentions, 'Vakula tree is held sacred by the *vaishnavas* because Ramanuja, a *vaishnavite* saint-philosopher was initiated on the *panch-samskarams* (five sacraments) i.e., *Tapam*, *Pundram*, *Namam*, *Mantram* and *Yagam*, under this tree. Since then the Vakula tree is considered as the tree of Enlightenment (*Bodhi* tree) of Ramanuja, just as the *Ashvattha* is considered as the *Bodhi* tree of Gautama Buddha. Madurantakam, a small town in Chingleput district of Madras was earlier known as Vakularanyam because of the *Vakula* trees growing there under which Ramanuja was initiated.<sup>124</sup>

In ancient India there was a strong belief that the *Vakula* tree blossoms when it is sprinkled with intoxicants from the mouth of a young maiden.<sup>125</sup>

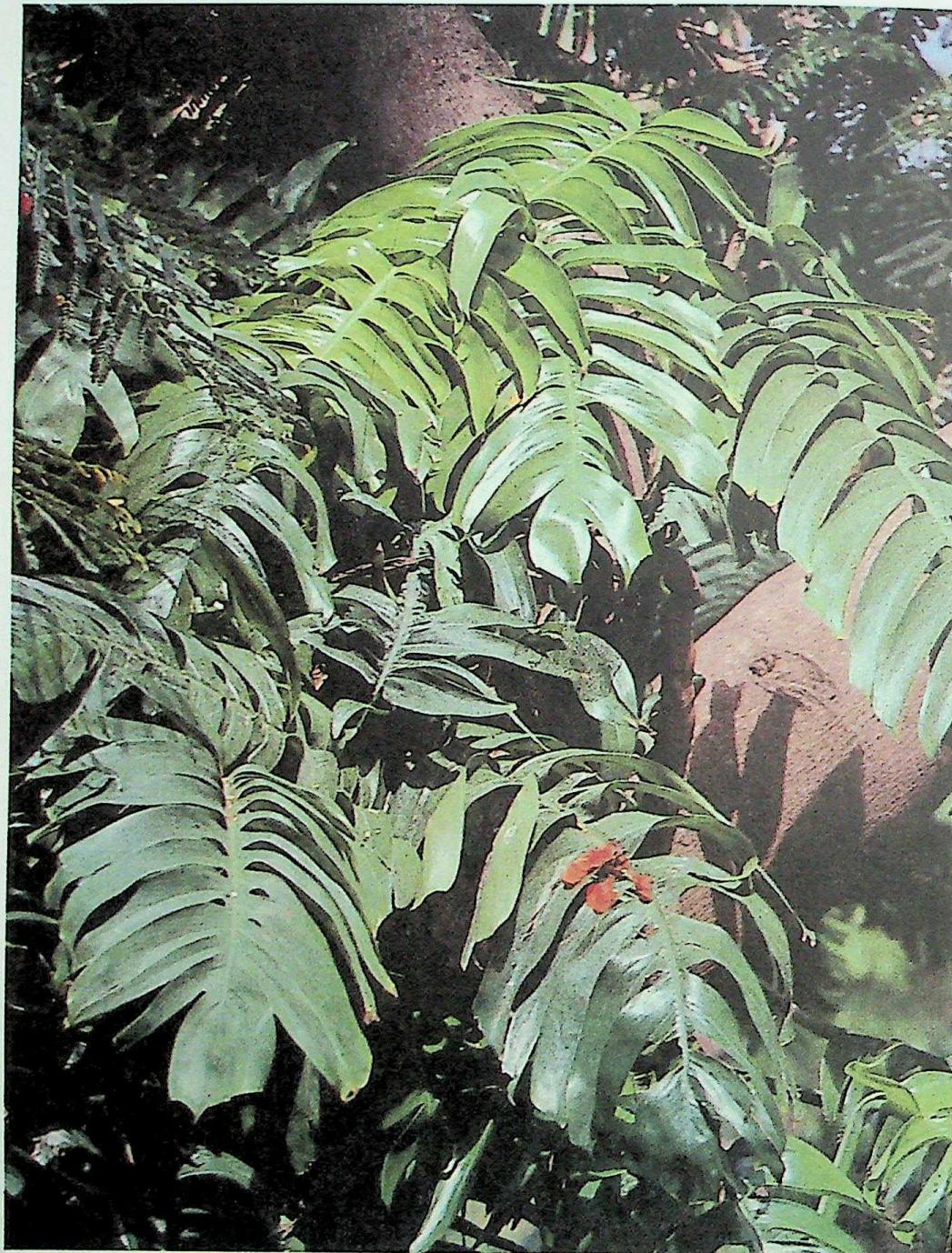
The only depiction of the *Vakula* tree branch is from Amaravati under which the head of *Yaksha* Chandramukha is sculpted (pl.135). The floral depiction based on epigraphical evidence was identified by C.Sivaramamurti who deciphered the inscription. Without the inscription it would not have been possible to identify the tree branch as no flowers are present. Quoting Banerjea, '... a fragmentary sculpture shows the head and upper part of a big-eyed *Yaksha* beneath some sort of a sculpture with the top portion of a tree and probably a heap of coins arranged in cylindrical form in the background. The inscription in *Brahmi* script of the 2nd or 1st century B.C. gives out the identity of the *Yaksha* as Chandramukha and the particular tree where it dwelt as *Vakula* (*Mimusops elengi*). The inscription was read by Sivaramamurti-Yakho Cadamukho *vaku* (*la*) *nivasi*, meaning the *Yaksha* Chandramukha, dweller of the *Vakula* (tree). Sivaramamurti remarks, 'the presence of a tree and a *chaitya* besides the *Yaksha* (named Chandramukha) should explain the word *Vaku* for *Yakshas* often lived in trees. The tree should then no doubt be a *Vakula* tree (*Mimusops elengi*), the sculptor having missed the letter *la*.<sup>126</sup>

Linear arrangement of small-sized star-shaped flowers are sculpted on Gujarat and Rajasthan temples but often the stone is corroded due to age, strong dusty winds or salt laden winds, if the temple is near the sea shore when it is difficult to say categorically if the flowers are of *Vakula*.

In Gujarat the flowers of *Vakula* are woven into garlands and *veni* and worn by women in their hair, or offered at temples.



Plate No. 135



Monstera deliciosa Liebm.

### MONSTERA DELICIOSA Liebm.

*Monstera deliciosa* is a large evergreen climber, a native of Central America but is cultivated throughout India for its foliage and cone-like edible fruit which has a mixed flavour of pineapple and banana and considered a delicacy. The fruit takes a long time to mature and ripens from base upwards.

Contrary to the belief that Monstera grows only in places which have shade and lot of moisture, Monstera does grow in comparatively dry places like Gujarat and Rajasthan but mainly cultivated in gardens. The climate of Gujarat and Rajasthan must have undergone a drastic change for the plant not to grow wild any more. The artisans would have been familiar with the plant to sculpt it.

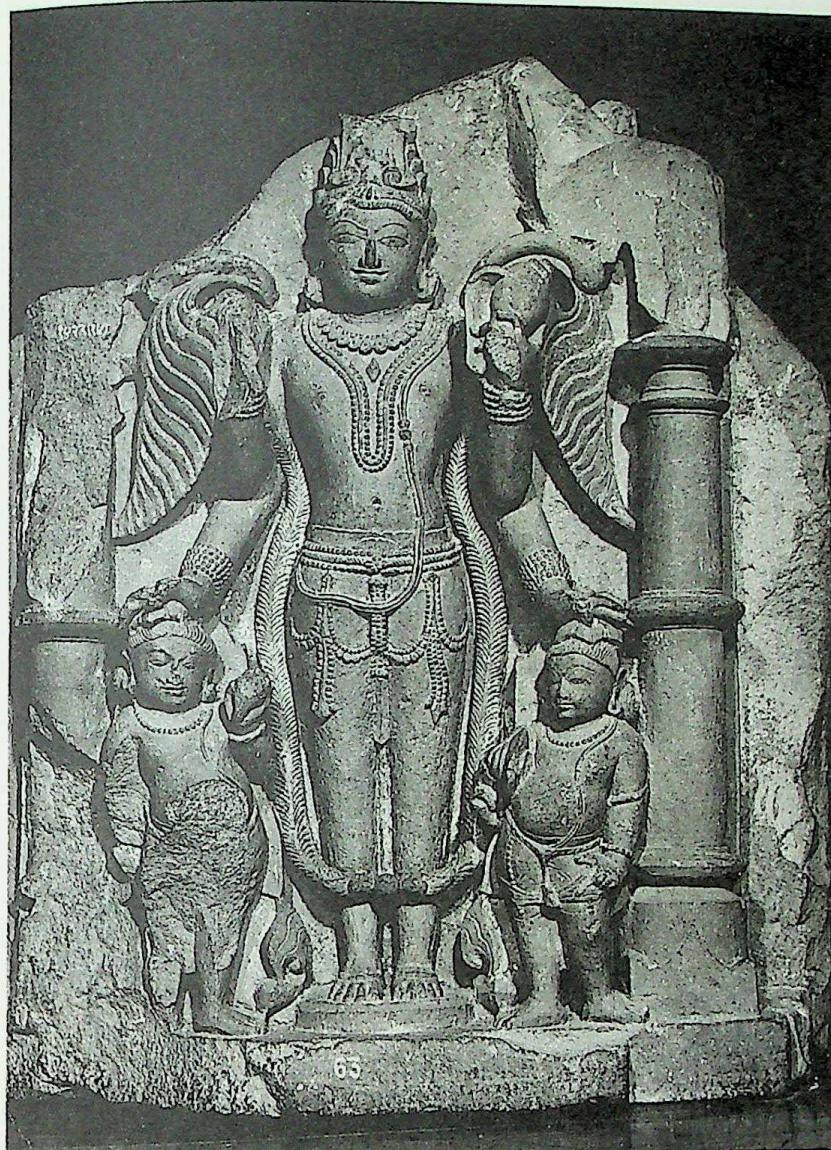
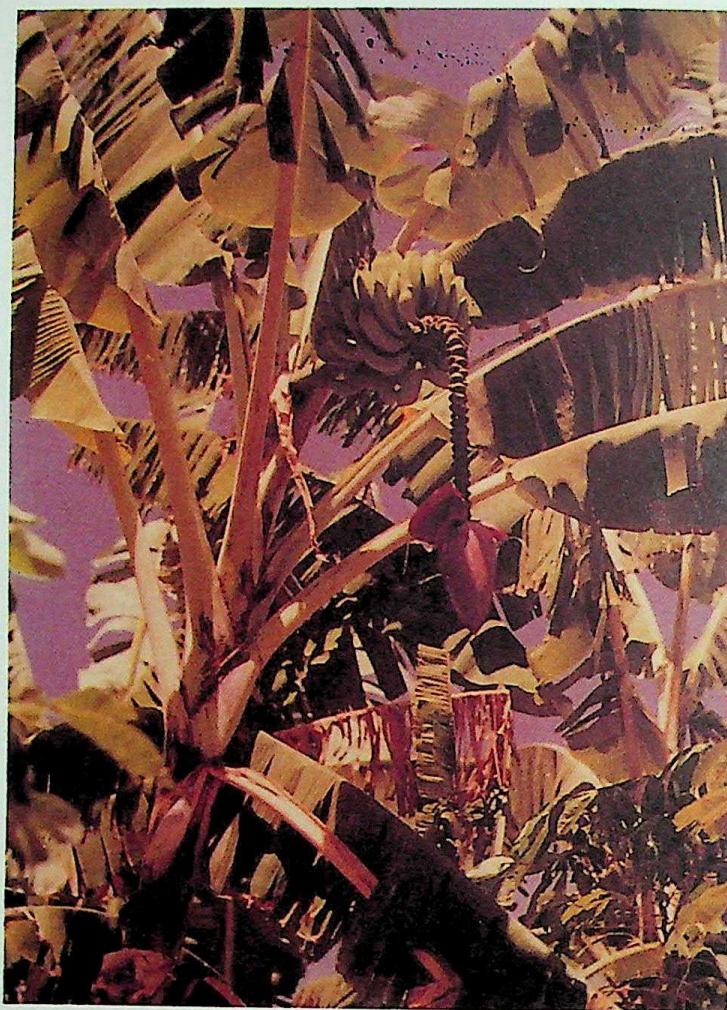


Plate No. 136

Plate No. 137

The large dissected leaves of Monstera are sculpted on various Hindu and Jain temples in Gujarat and Rajasthan. They are sculpted mainly behind the heads of various deities as well as the top corners of pillars. These temples date from the 11th to the 13th century A.D. The panels from the original Somnatha temple, Gujarat at present housed in Somnatha museum are dated 13th century A.D. Quite a few panels in it have Monstera like leaves sculpted on them. Mandor statue of Vishnu near Jodhpur, dated 11th century A.D. has not only the Monstera leaves but even the stalks of the leaves sculpted. The standing Vishnu *murti* has his hands on two male figures, probably *ayudha-purushas*. Vishnu's upper left hand holds a conch, the upper right hand is broken. The figure on Vishnu's right is holding a fruit of Monstera on a plate in his left hand (pl.136). A 12th century statue of Bahubali from Deh near Nagore also has the same floral motif, the two leaves with their stalks present at the back of the head of the deity gives the impression as if the leaves are arising out of the head. From Lakhamandal is a pillar decoration with rows of different types of floral motif and the topmost row is of Monstera leaves with their prominent mid-rib and large leaves which appear to be dissected. From Osian temple no.1 in Rajasthan is a pillar decoration where a thinly clad woman is standing with her back to the pillar on which are sculpted three stalks of Monstera and a group of five leaves crowning the top (pl.137).



*Musa paradisiaca* Linn.

### MUSA PARADISIACA Linn.

Plantain (Banana) plants are perennial, stoloniferous with a tree like appearance possessing an underground rhizome. This rhizome continuous upwards as a pseudo-aerial stem consisting of a long, stiff leaf-sheaths rolled round each other, called a shaft. The axis of the inflorescence arises from the rhizome and piercing through the leaf shaft (false stem) emerges at the top of the aerial shoot. It has large, oblong, erect leaves with a characteristic unicostate, parallel venation. The inflorescence is a drooping spike with a fleshy axis enclosed by one or more large and often brightly coloured bracts called spathes. Fruits are oblong, yellowish-green when ripe, sweet and edible. The plant flowers from April to June and ripens during the rainy season upto winter.

The plantain plant cultivated from very early times is considered highly auspicious particularly for marriage ceremonies as the fruit is a symbol of fertility and good luck. Plantain leaf shafts (false stems) are fixed on either side of the entrance gate on auspicious occasions and the wedding *mandapa* has Plantain plants fixed on the four corners.

The tree is mentioned in connection with the marriage of Shiva and Parvati. *Siva Purana* gives a description of their marriage *mandapa*, 'The roads were watered and swept clean. At every door, stumps of Plantain plants and other auspicious symbols were fixed' . . . 'The courtyards were embellished with Plantain trees tied with silken cords. There were also festoons of mango leaves.'<sup>127</sup> This practice continues till today. *Siva Purana* also mentions the greatness of Shiva in which *Arghya* is offered to Shiva with the Plantain fruits.<sup>128</sup>

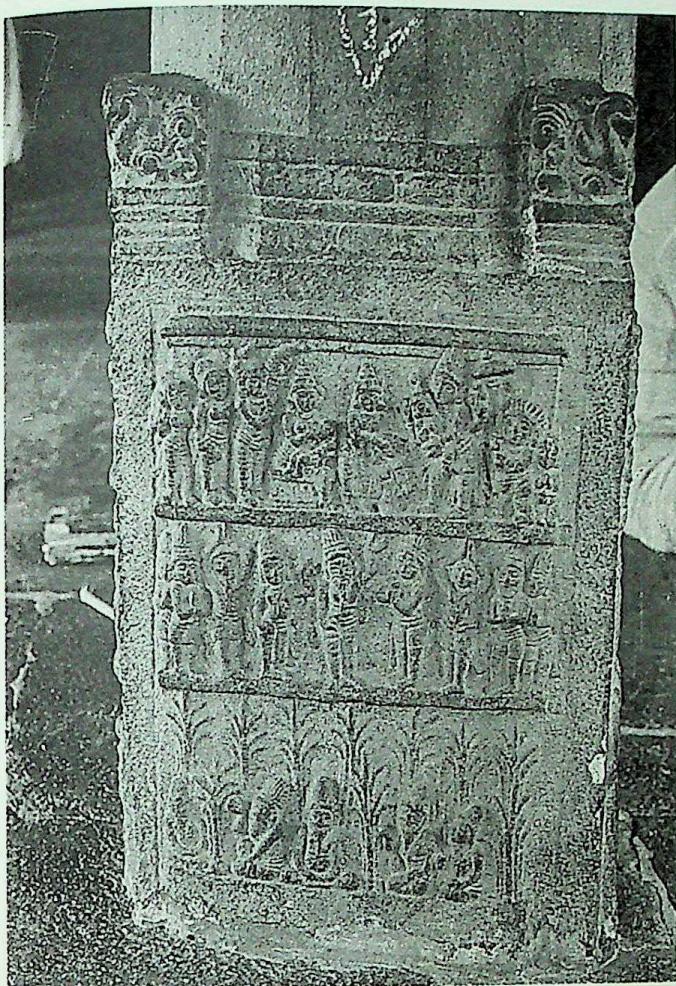


Plate No. 138



Plate No. 139

Banana plant is sculpted in all its forms and stages of growth from a fully matured plant to a Banana plantation. The latter is sculpted at Airavatesvara temple, Darasuram in Tamil Nadu (pl.138). Sitting under the banana plantation are holy men, meditating. The middle panel has holy men standing in various *yogic* postures. The upper panel has a royal figure with a child and attendants carrying fly whisks and umbrellas. At Jambukeshwar temple (pl.139) and at Meenakshi temple, Madura, both pillar decorations, the plant has been sculpted not only with its large sized leaves but also with bunches of fruits. At Tiruppurukundrum Murugan cave temple in Tamil Nadu, different stages in the development and growth of the Banana plant are sculpted. This plant is commonly depicted in the woman and tree motif theme showing a woman standing under the banana plant holding with her left raised arm the plant, and the right hand on her hip. The plant is not only a fertility symbol but also has erotic connotations. Often a couple is shown under the tree. In plate 140, Shakuntala, the adopted daughter of *rishi* Kanya and her lover Dushyanta are standing under the banana tree. The false unbranched stem is erect and the long, large leaves with their unicostate venation are clear. In plate 141, a man and a woman who appear to be *Sadhus*, are standing near a banana tree. The man with matted hair has his left arm around the woman while she has her right hand around his shoulders, with her waist cloth loose. In plate 142 from Avantipur, Kashmir, a king and his queen are watching a woman dance. There are banana plants on either side of the panel. On the right, the leaves of the banana plant are whole and show the prominent midrib and parallel venation clearly, while on the left of the wall panel, the leaves are shredded as happens to banana leaves when strong winds blow. Banana plants do not grow in the Avantipur area of Kashmir. Very likely the artisans came



Plate No. 140

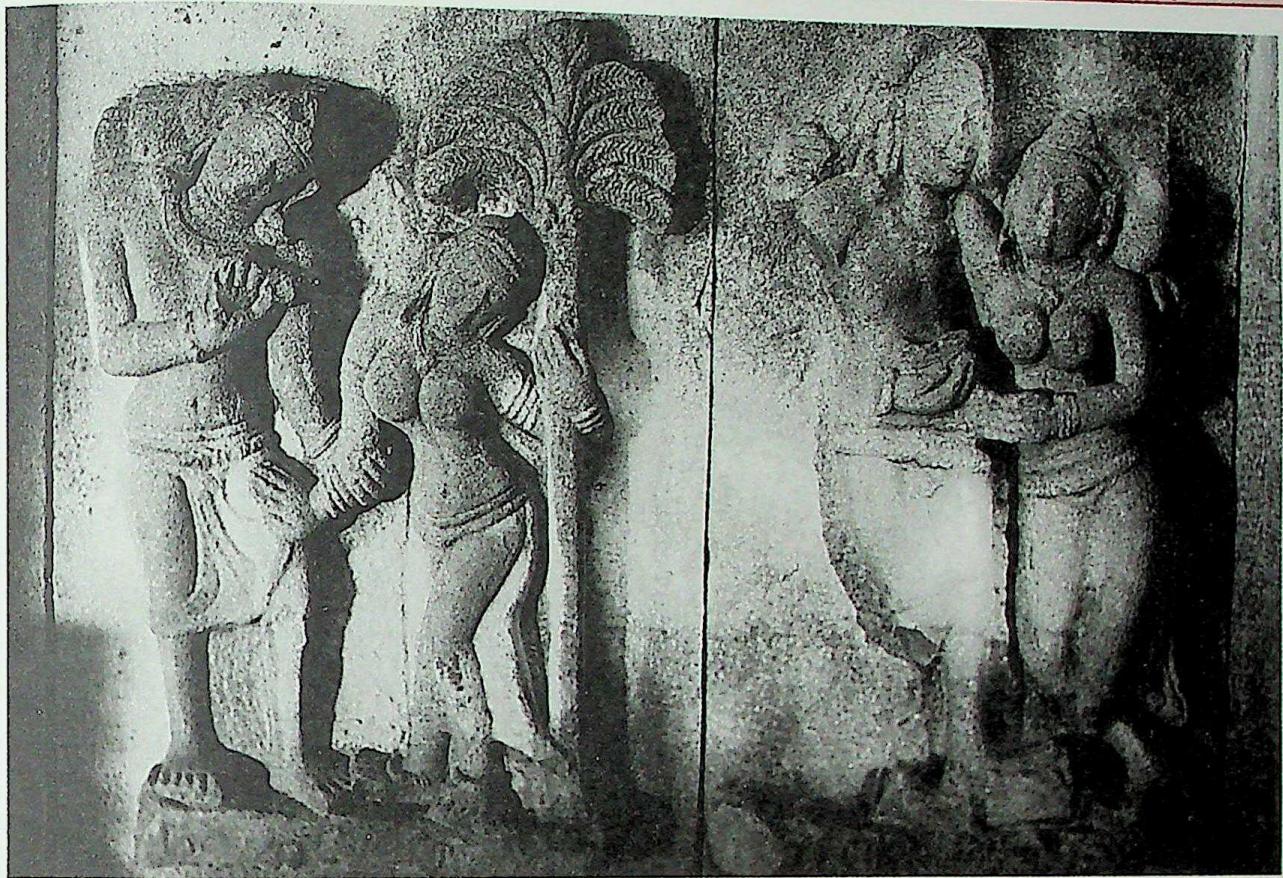
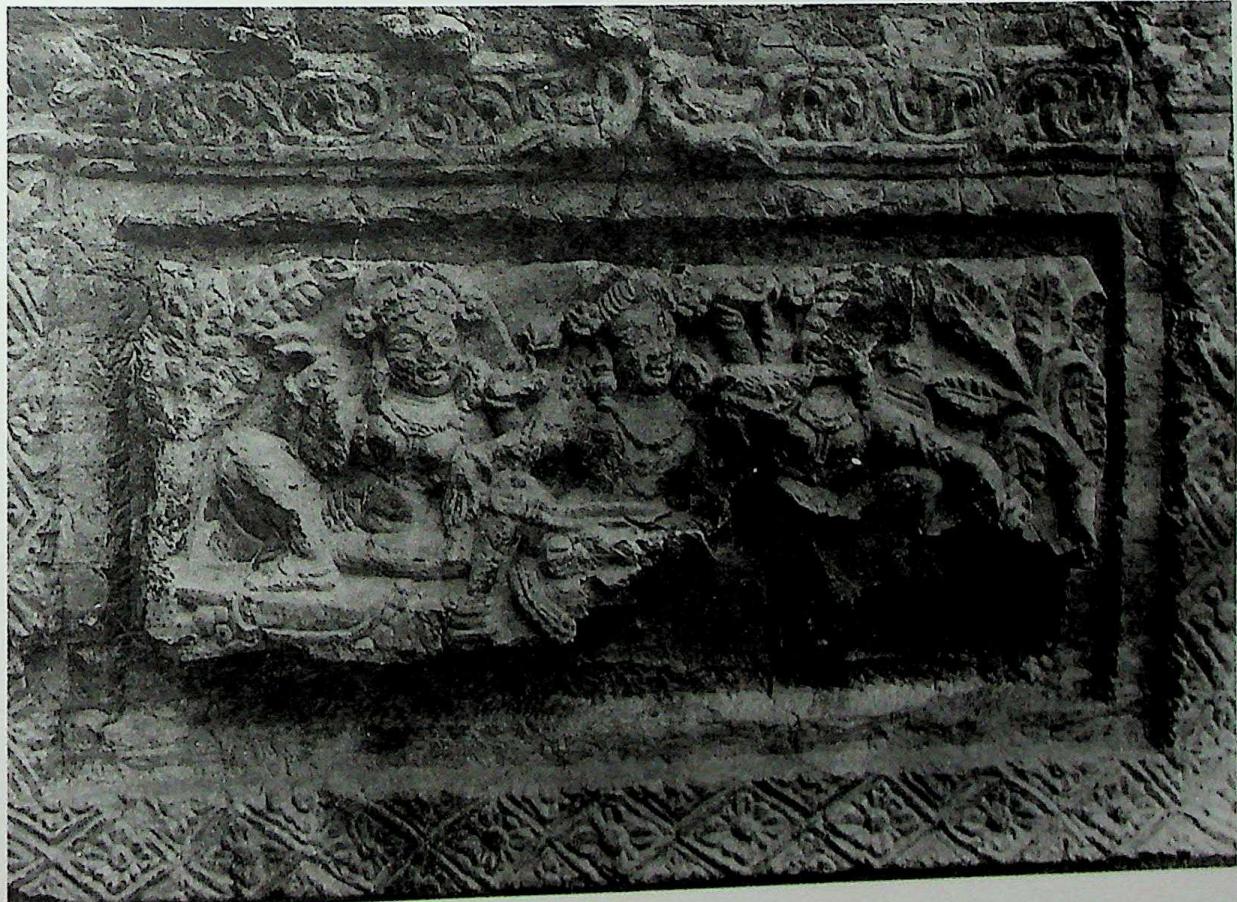


Plate No. 141

Plate No. 142



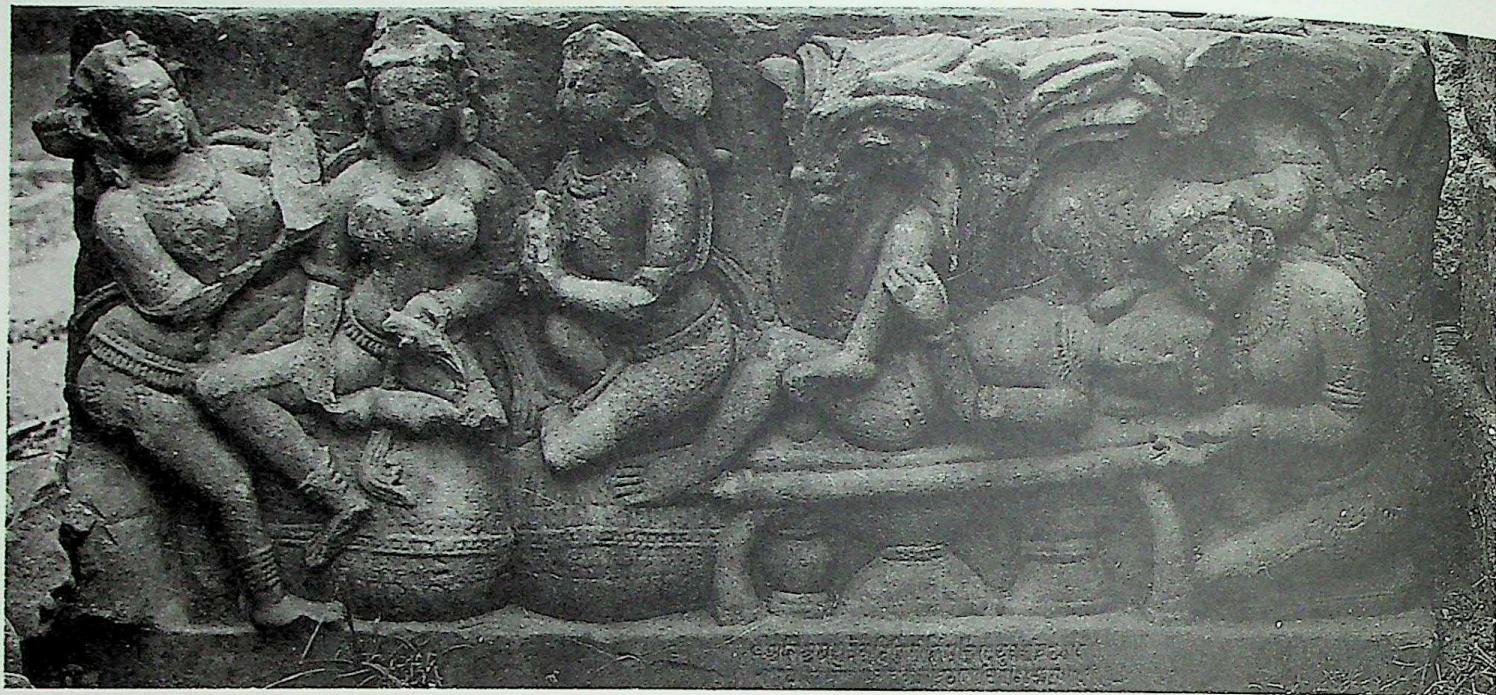


Plate No. 143

Plate No. 144



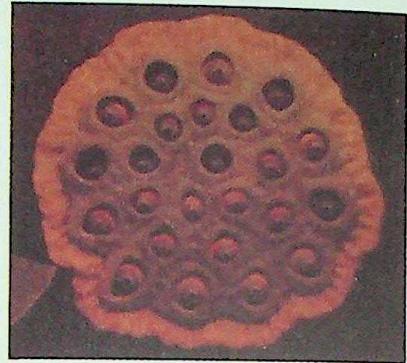
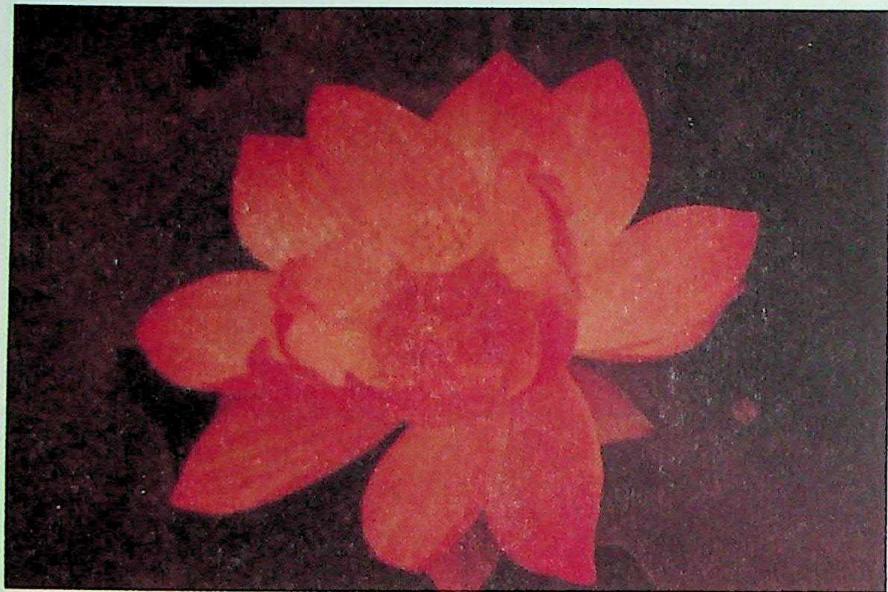


Plate No. 145

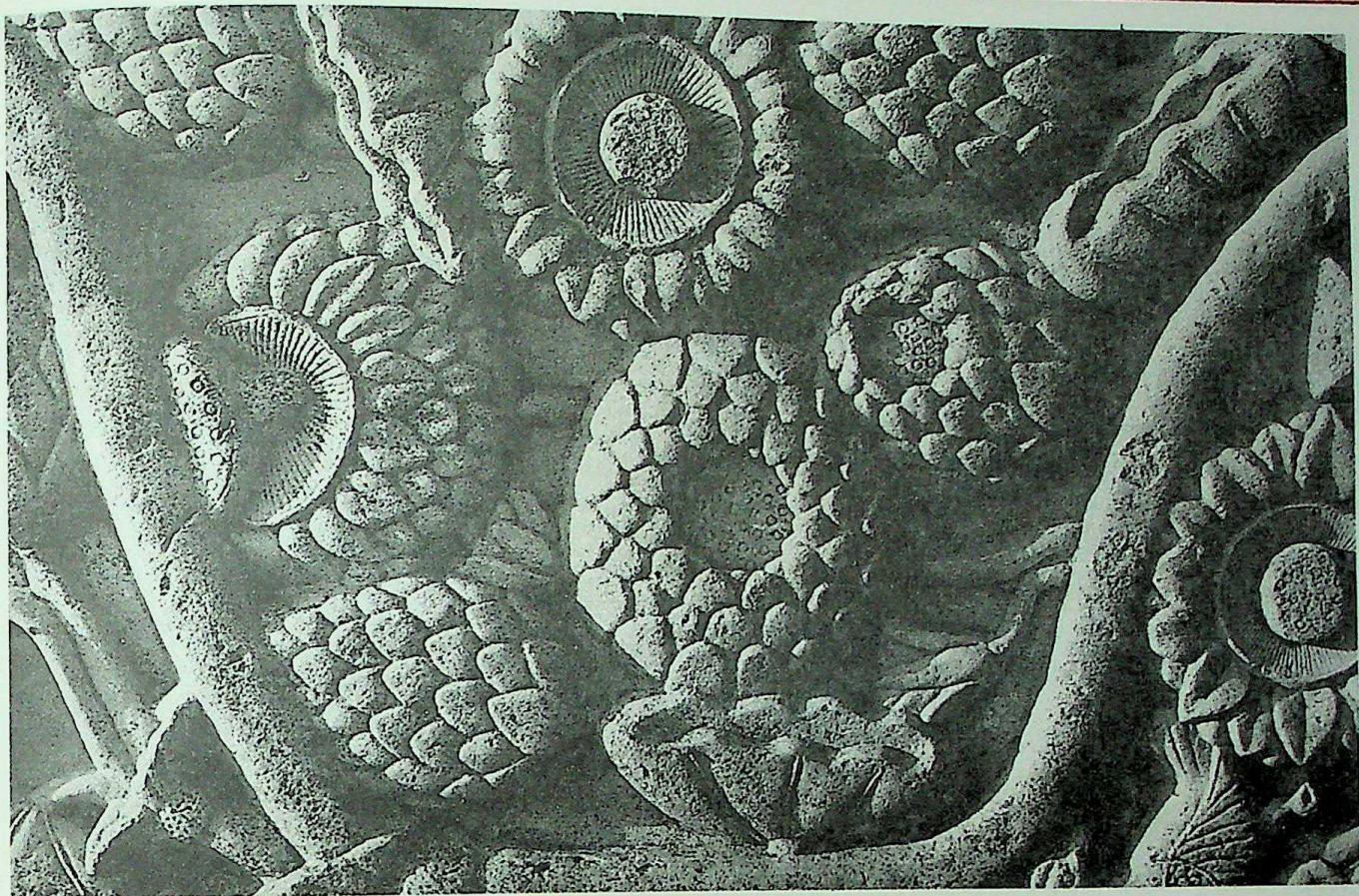
from areas where banana plants grew and were familiar with their morphology. A 10th century A.D. panel from Tewar, Jabalpur (pl.143), shows an erotic scene from *Gatha Saptasati*. On the left of the panel, two maids are persuading a bashful maiden to go to her lover and on the right side, the man is lying on a couch under the banana plants and the maiden is caressing him. The plants are stylised.

An excellent depiction of the banana plant is from Abaneri (pl.144) where a scene from Krishna's juvenile exploits is depicted. The demon Keshin, at the command of the evil Kansa, went to Vrindavana in the shape of a horse, to kill Krishna. He terrorised the inhabitants of Vrindavana and they ran to Krishna and Balarama for protection. To kill Krishna, Keshin ran towards him with his mouth open but was instead killed by Krishna who thrust his arm into Keshin's mouth. The arm enlarged in size inside his throat and Keshin was suffocated to death.<sup>129</sup> The presence of the banana plant is incidental and has nothing whatsoever to do with the legend of the killing of Keshin.

Elephants attacking a banana plant are a common depiction on temples of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Banana plants are also a favourite floral depiction on Bharhut and Sanchi stupas. A Scene from the *Jatakas* depicted in Plate 145 shows a banana plant with very clear depiction of the shaft or the false stem of the banana plant, leaves as well as bunches of banana fruit.



*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn.



### NELUMBO NUCIFERA Gaertn.

Lotus, the national flower of India, held sacred by Hindus, Jains and Buddhists, is the most common floral depiction on temples. There is rarely a temple which is not associated with it. It is depicted as a full-blown flower, flower buds, *padma* or *kamalasana* as the seat or foot-rest of the deities, decorative panels of lotus flowers, deities holding lotus flower stalks, lotus petals as a decorative design or the entire plant with flower-buds, flowers, leaves and the seed bearing receptacle (pl.146). It also shows a curving rootstock with a node from which a bract like structure is protruding. On the lower right hand corner can be seen a bird and a worm.

*Kamalasana* or the lotus seat of deities is a favourite form of floral motif and with few exceptions, practically every god or goddess is sitting or standing on a lotus flower. This could be because lotus is a symbol of beauty, fertility and purity. Banerjea writes: 'The Buddhist Goddess Tara sits in *ardhaparyanka* pose on a double petalled lotus, holding in one left hand a lotus flower. Her foot rests on a lotus,<sup>130</sup> as seen in plate 147. Another common form of sculpting the lotus plant is in association with a pair of geese, such as at the 10th century A.D. Nilakanthesvara temple, Kekind in Rajasthan, and in Bharhut, Sanchi and at Teli-ka-mandir, Gwalior, all in Madhya Pradesh (pl.148).

In Hindu and Buddhist cosmology, the lotus flower arises and unfolds from the formless endless Ocean of Creation and represents the Universe. The regents of the eight directions are its eight opened petals. The eight-petaled flower though called as the 8-petaled lotus is more symbolic of the eight directions as there is no lotus of 8-petals. A large number of deities hold a flower-stalk, the flower being 8-petalled, e.g., Vishnu as Vaikuntha from Kashmir, Surya from Raj Shahi, Bangladesh and Loka-natha from Vishnupur, Gaya, Bihar

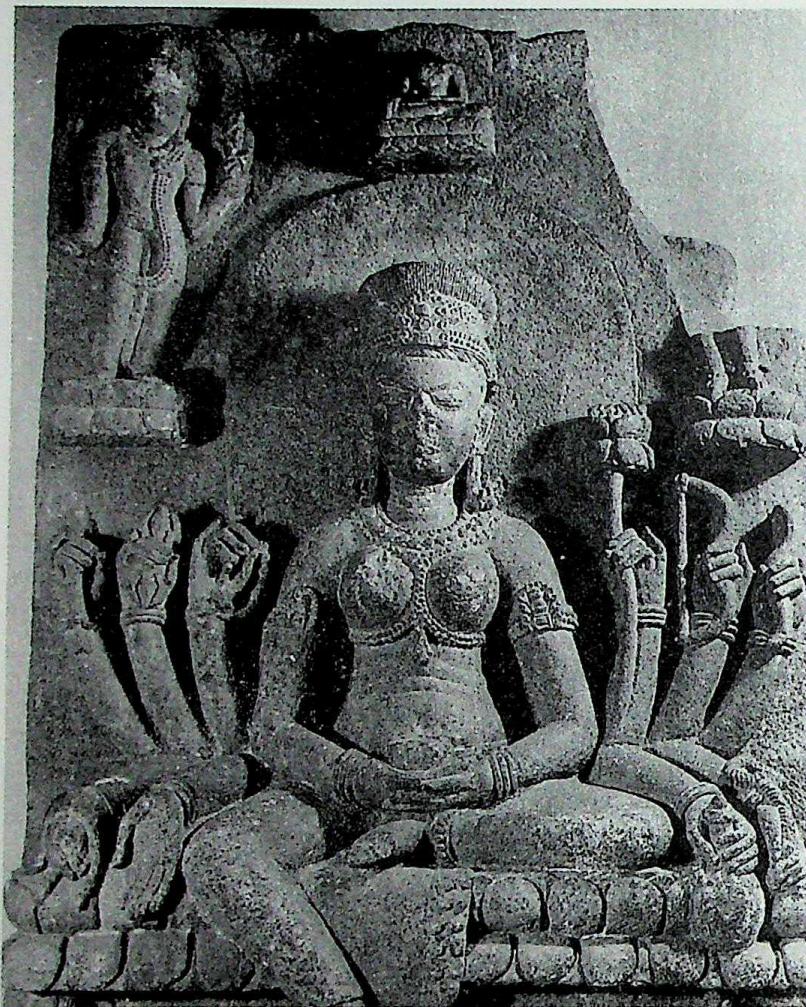


Plate No. 147

(pl.149). The deities holding an 8-petalled flower symbolise their suzerainty over the eight directions of space.

Lakshmi, the Goddess of fertility, beauty and prosperity, is associated with the lotus plant and is known as *Padma*, the lotus Goddess. Though normally she is sitting or standing on a red lotus, she is sometimes depicted not in a human form but by her symbols, the lotus flower. There are female images of the tantrik cult where the nude female figure carries instead of a head, a full blown lotus flower (pl.150). Kamalmukhi devi, the lotus-faced goddess as this image is called is really an aspect of Lakshmi as a goddess of fertility. Such figures are common in Karnataka. Quoting Sivaramamurti, 'the lotus replacing the head is specially mentioned in the *Vishnudharmottara* (3.82.8), *devyascha mastake padmam tatha Karyain manoharam Saubhagyam tad vijarihi.*'<sup>131</sup>

'The immaculate lotus arising from the depth of the vassal waters of creation is associated with the notion of purity and with the cohesive tendency (*sattva*) . . . ' and represents not only the unfolding of creation but the lotus symbolically represents the seed of endless millions of universe.'<sup>132</sup> In plate 151 is depicted the Birth of Brahma, the Creator, sitting on a lotus arising from the navel of Vishnu when the latter lay reposing on his serpent couch Ananta (endless), floating on the primordial waters under a starless sky. This lotus which bore Brahma is considered as a duplicate manifestation of the Goddess Padma (Lotus personified). A beautifully sculpted panel at Deograh shows Brahma sitting on the *nabhi-kamala* of Vishnu in his *Anantasayi* form and is thus called lotus born. The name and iconography of *Yaksha* Brahma, the *upasaka* of the tenth Jina Sitalanatha,

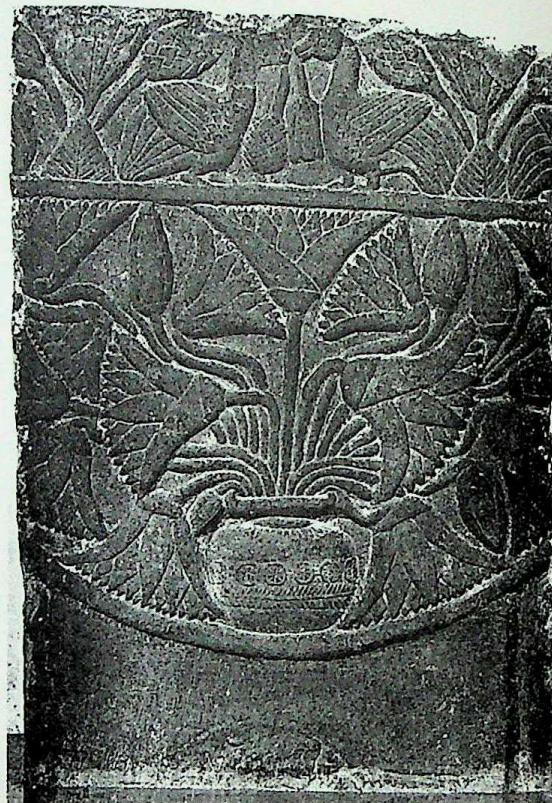


Plate No. 148



show that he was a Jaina adaptation of Brahma Prajapati of the Hindu triad; he has four faces and a lotus seat.<sup>133</sup>

Lotus petals are sometimes carved all around the base of the temple in a way that they give the impression of the temple arising out of a fully-opened lotus flower as in the Rukmini temple and Dwaraka temple, Gujarat or the Veditbandha of Mt. Abu temple, Rajasthan (pl.152). The fully opened lotus symbolises the universe and the temple arising from its midst is the house of the Creator.

The best depiction of the lotus is in Buddhist places of worship such as Sanchi, Bharhut, Sarnath, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. The plant is depicted both in a stylistic and a naturalistic manner with leaves, flowers, buds and the seed bearing receptacle, the plant growing either in water or arranged in a *kalash*, a water pot symbolising abundance (pls.148, 153).

A common depiction is of deities holding fully opened lotus flower, or a lotus bud in either one or both hands. Surya, the Sun god is iconographically identified as holding fully opened lotus flowers in his two hands (pl.154). Whereas his natural hands hold full blown lotus flowers, he holds a garland of lotus flowers (or a fillet of lotus seeds) in his back right hand.<sup>134</sup> Even though full blown lotus flowers in his hands are his distinctive point of identification, yet the Alampur Surya carries half-opened buds.

Shri Lakshmi sitting or standing on a fully opened lotus flower, holding lotus stalks in one hand, her left foot supported by a lotus, with two elephants, also standing on lotus flowers on either side spraying water on her, is called the *abhisheka* of Lakshmi, a common depiction on Hindu and Buddhist temples (pl.155). Lakshmi, basically a Hindu goddess of fortune is accepted in Buddhism where in addition, the eight auspicious objects mentioned in Buddhist texts are also depicted. Water is essential for vegetation and the lotus goddess presides over the fertility and moisture of the soil. From the earliest *vedic* times, water has been regarded in India as a manifestation of the divine essence and the lotus plant grows in water. In plate 156, a medallion from Bharhut shows Lakshmi with a turban like head dress, holding her hair plaits with her left hand, and her right hand resting on her hip, near which arises a stalk of a lotus bud. Surrounding Lakshmi is the lotus root-stock giving off lotus leaves, buds and the seed bearing receptacle. Elephants, normally the attendants of the lotus goddess, also worship the *Bodhi* tree *Nyagrodha* (pl.80). An interesting medallion from Sanchi, shows lotus stalks coming out of the mouth of a tortoise. Tortoise lives on land as well as in water. It represents the *Kurma avatara* of Vishnu whose consort is the lotus Goddess Lakshmi. The tortoise has taken the place of the *Purna-kumbha*, the water-pot symbolising abundance (pl.157).

The Deograh panel depicting the *kari-varada* aspect of Vishnu (pl.158) is mentioned in the *Bhagavata purana*.<sup>135</sup> According to the legend, an Elephant King residing on the Trikuta mountains was roaming around along with his female herd. It was the mating season and he was excited, intoxicated with the sweet juice that exuded from his temples. To quench his thirst, he plunged into a lake and seeing lotus flowers growing there, started collecting them. A powerful crocodile inhabiting the lake, attacked him. In fear, the elephants standing on the banks of the lake raised a cry while the elephant king prayed to the Supreme *purusha* Vishnu, and in response to his prayers, Vishnu came on his vehicle Garuda and cut off the head of the crocodile with his discus. Whereas in the story as given in the *Bhagavata Purana*, a crocodile is mentioned, in depiction of this legend, a seven-headed serpent

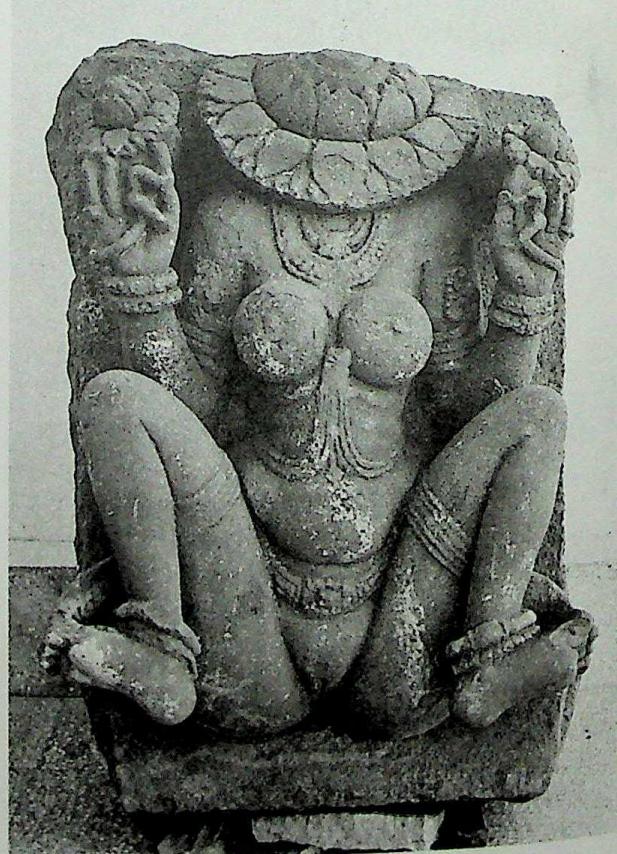


Plate No. 150

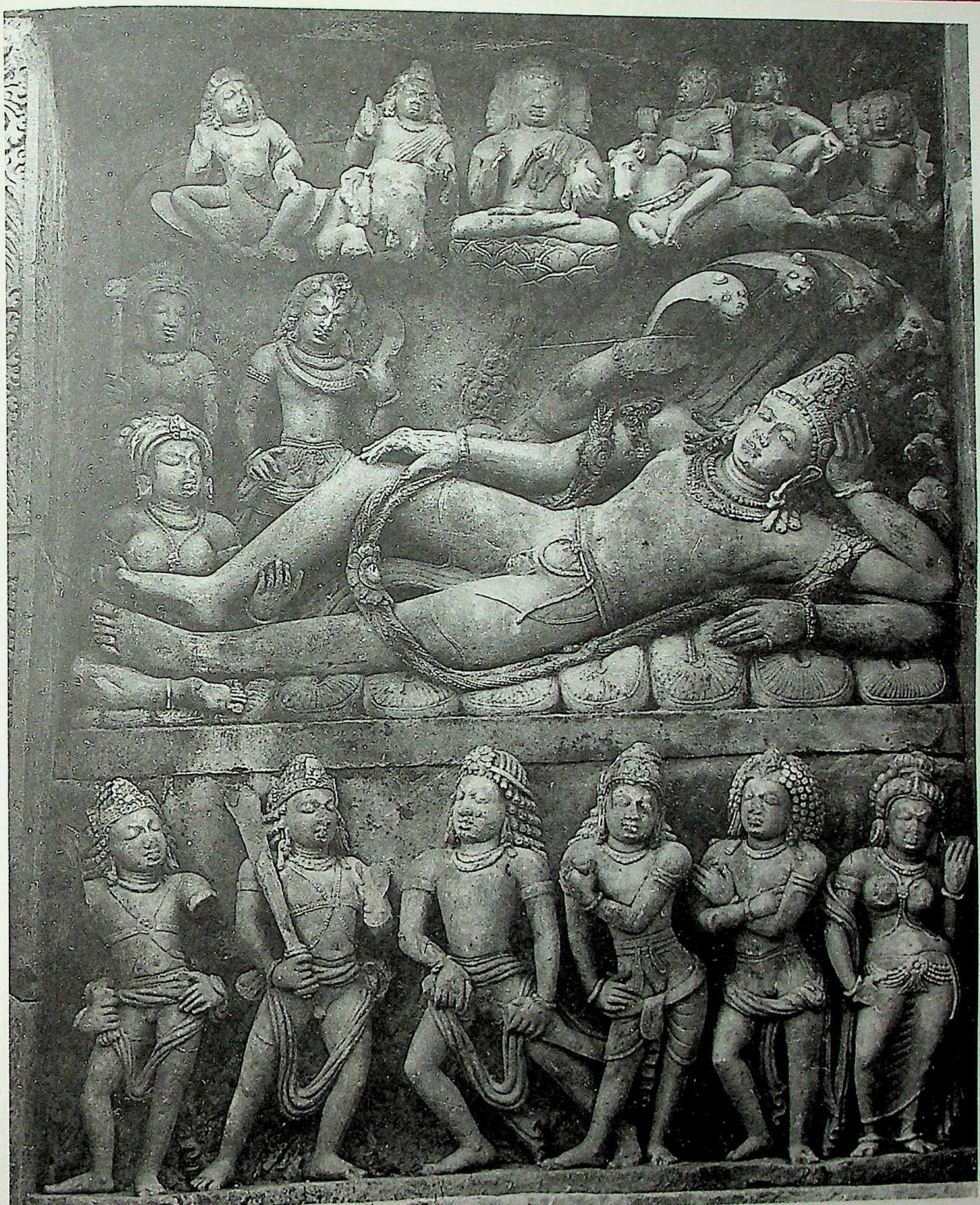


Plate No. 151

*Description of the Plants Depicted on the Temples*

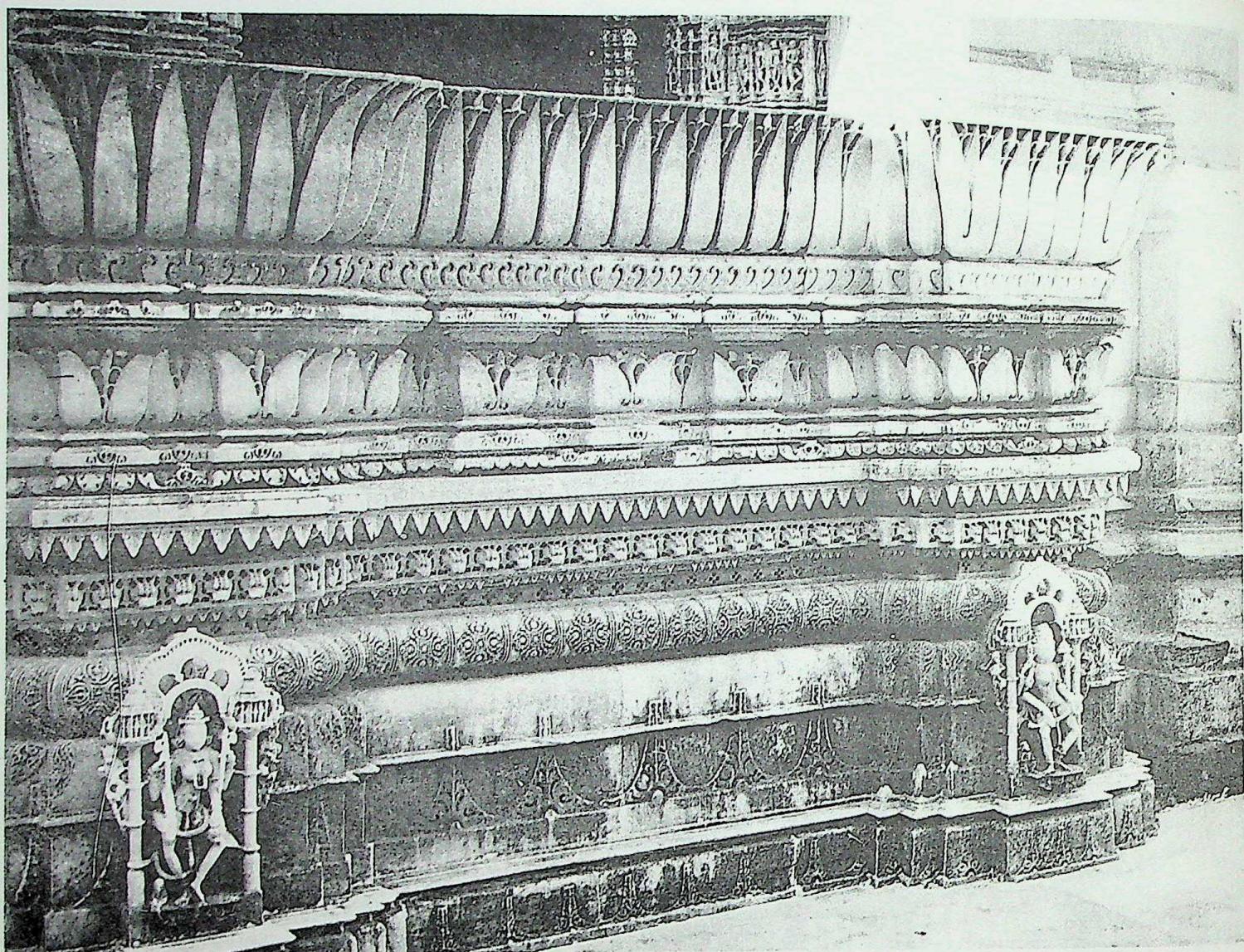
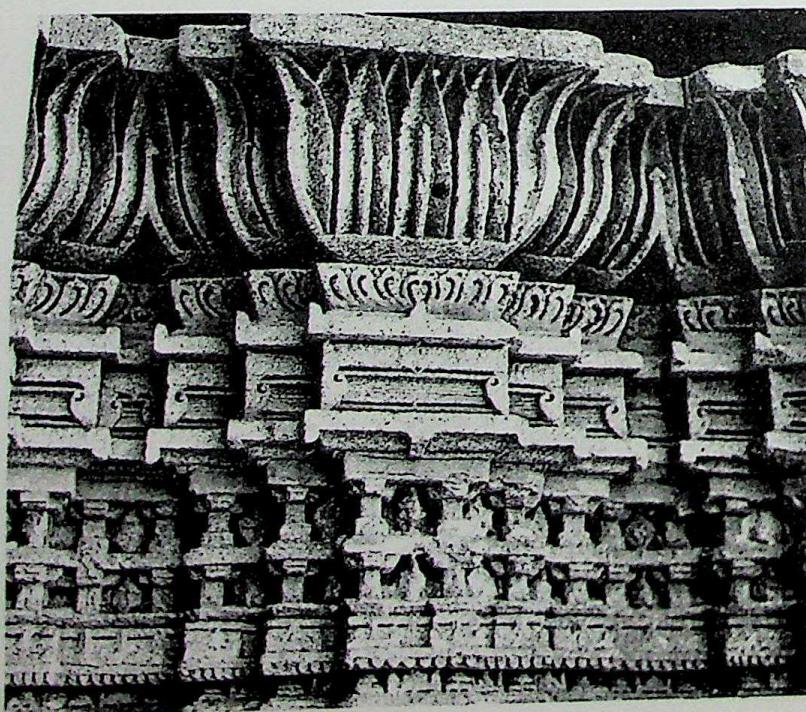


Plate No. 152



Plants in Indian Temple Art

with a human face has been sculpted. This is perhaps deliberately done as only a serpent can entangle a body in its coils and not a crocodile whose body is straight and stiff.

The crocodile was in fact a *gandharva* named Huhu who was cursed to take the form of a crocodile by *rishi* Devala. Long ago, as the story goes, Huhu, along with his wives was playing in the waters when Devala went there for a bath. The *gandharva* dragged the *rishi* by his feet and consequently was cursed to become a crocodile. The elephant on the other hand was a Pandyan king, Indradyumna. He was engaged in meditations when *rishi* Agastya came with his disciples on a visit. The king was under a vow of silence during his meditation and, could not receive Agastya with the customary words of welcome. Annoyed, Agastya cursed him to become an elephant saying that he had the intellect of an elephant. The elephant according to Hindu mythology, represents the characteristics of *Jiva* of this *Manvantara*. The elephant gets excited and mad when the sweet juice exudes from his temples. In the story, madness represents the prevalence of *Kama*. The elephant was passionately attached to his wives. The *Jiva* had given too much of himself to *Kama* and he was carried away helplessly by the demon of desire when he decided to go into the lake. He could not help himself and needed some super-human help to pull him out of this predicament and help came in the form of Hari, an incarnation of Vishnu.



Plate No. 153

Banerjea describes Shri Lakshmi: 'If her image is 4-armed, the attributes in her hands are a lotus flower, a wood apple (*shriphala*, *bilva*), a conch shell, a pot of nectar, citron (*matulunga*), a shield, a club.'<sup>136</sup> The mistake that Banerjea makes is in the identification of the fruit in her hand, as a wood apple, the Indian name for which is *Kapittha*. It resembles the *Bilva* fruit. It is more likely that Lakshmi carries a *Shriphala*, also called *Bilva*, in her hands as she is associated with the *Bilva* tree. Shri Lakshmi as described in *Vishnudharmottara*, *Amsumadbhedagama*, *Purva karanagama*, *Rupamandana*, etc., as four-armed, white coloured, dressed in white garments and decked with many ornaments. She holds in her four hands any four of the following objects: manuscript (*pustaka*), white lotus (*pundarika*), rosary, musical instrument (*vina*), water vessel (*kamandalu*).<sup>137</sup>

From a hymn in a small supplement of later verses appended to the *Rig Veda*, Zimmer writes: 'Lotus being a very important symbol, it finds mention in various descriptions, in art and literature. *Padmini* or *Pushkarini* is one possessed of the lotus or abounding in lotuses; *Padmesthita*, one standing on lotus; *Padmavarna*, the lotus coloured; *Padmasambhava*, the lotus born; *Padmakshi*, the lotus eyed; *Padmahasta*, carries a lotus in her hand; *Padma-uru*, lotus thighed; *Padmamalini*, decked with lotus garlands. In the *Rig-Veda*, the Lotus Goddess is called Shri or Lakshmi, and is associated with the symbol of lotus.'<sup>138</sup>

'When the divine life substance is about to put forth the universe, the cosmic waters grow a thousand-petaled lotus of pure gold, radiant as the sun. This is the door or the gate, the opening or mouth of the womb of the universe. It is the first product of the creative principle, gold in token of this incorruptible nature. It opens to give birth first to the demiurge creator, Brahma. From its pericarp then issue the hosts of the created world. According to the Hindu conception, the waters are female; they are the maternal, procreative aspect of the absolute and the cosmic lotus is their generative organ. The cosmic lotus is called "The highest form or aspect of Earth," "The Goddess Earth." It is personified as the Mother Goddess through whom the Absolute moves into Creation.'<sup>139</sup>

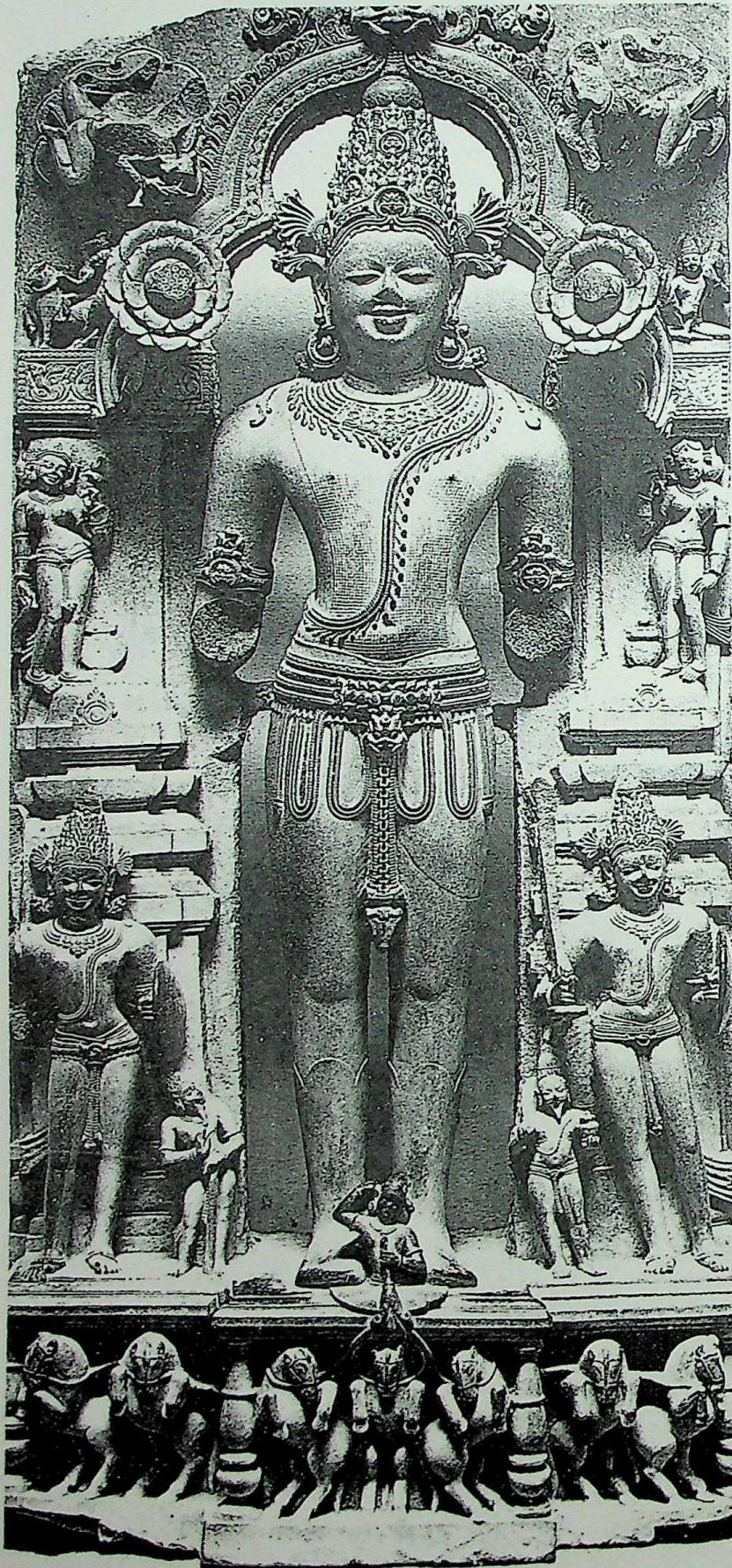


Plate No. 154

Though a thousand-petalled lotus is mentioned in ancient texts and is also depicted on temples (pl.159), there is no lotus flower of thousand petals. Thousand petals symbolically means infinity. Temple ceilings ornamented with lotus design are a common occurrence (pl.160).

Zimmer writes: 'The ubiquitous lotus is a sign of her presence even where her human features do not appear. And not uncommonly the masculine divinities even copy her traditional poses. A characteristic attitude of the goddess, that is known as "lotus in hand" *padmahasta*, *padmapani*, is taken over in the iconography of Mahayana Buddhism by the universal saviour *Padmapani* (lotus in hand), the greatest among the *Bodhisattvas*, or immortal helpers of the Buddha.'<sup>140</sup>

The Varaha avatar of Vishnu is sculpted at the Udaigiri caves in Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh wearing a *vajayantimala* known as a garland of 1,000 lotus flowers, which in fact is made of different types of flowers and fruits. In the Gupta age, this garland of 1,000 lotus flowers was called *Kinjalkini*.<sup>141</sup>

Practically all Hindu temples have a lotus pond attached to them which is called a *Padmalaya* or *Pushkara*. According to Kosambi, 'This range of seemingly unconnected meanings for the word *pushkara* is highly suggestive; lake, lotus, act of dancing, the sky, the root *pus* from which it is derived, like the very close *pushkara*, denotes fertility, nourishment, plenty...'. The Cambodian *apsara* dancers of Angkor Vat are portrayed with the lotus flowers in one hand and lotus seedpod in the other, the first symbolising the *pushkara* while the second obviously a fertility symbol. How old the tradition really is may be seen from the Indo-Greek coin of Peukelaotis where the lotus crowned patron-goddess of the city Puskaravati is portrayed in precisely the same way, with the name Ambi-Mother Goddess. The Shatapatha Brahmana vii.4.1.11 tells us that the lotus leaf (*puskaraparna*) is the womb (*yoni*), and in that the *pushkara* is the lotus leaf...'<sup>142</sup>

The lotus plant is typically of Indian origin



Plate No. 155

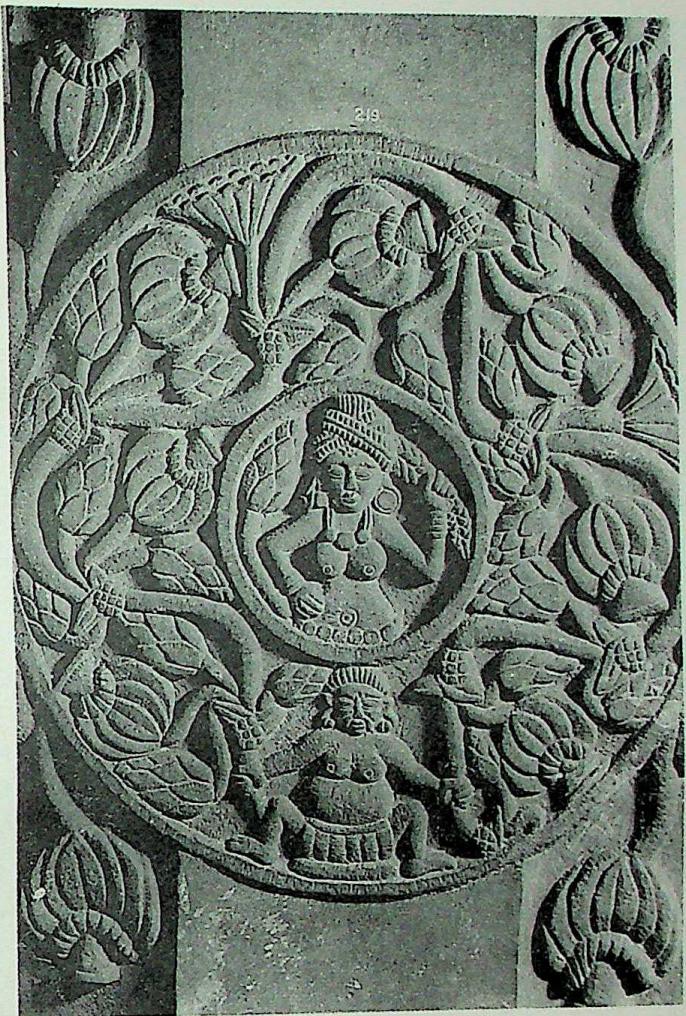


Plate No. 156

and the Aryans could not have been familiar with it. The Indian iconography must have taken this symbol from the pre-Aryan cult of lotus already prevailing in India prior to the Aryan conquest.

According to *Vishnudharmottara* and *Rupamandane*, Ganesha is endowed with four hands and in one he carries a lotus.<sup>143</sup> Among the temples of Mukhalingam, a large number of lotus medallions are found in the Madhukesvara temple sculpting them either with only the petals, or the lotus flower with the seed bearing receptacle.<sup>144</sup> According to Dehejia, Panigrahi suggests that the earlier images of Parvati hold a *Ketaka* flower while the later examples depict her with a lotus.<sup>145</sup>

Practically every Hindu, Jain and Buddhist temple or deity is associated in some way or other with either the lotus or some water lily as mentioned below. The lotus decoration of temple ceilings is common in Kashmir, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Ekanamsa holds a book or a lotus in her hand; Buddha sits on a lotus seat; Lakshmi sits or stands on a fully opened lotus flower and holds a lotus in her hand. Jyestha Devi from Kodumbalur Muvarkovil holds lotus buds in her two hands (stray stone); Subrahmanya holds a lotus flower; Velayudha sits on a *padmasana*; Senapati 12-armed, one hand holds a lotus; Shravanabhava 12-armed, one arm holds a *padma*; Shanmukha 12-armed, one left hand carries a *padma*; Senani 12-armed, carries a *padma*; Balaswami sculpted as a child with his



Plate No. 157

parents as in the Somaskanda aspect of Shiva images, carry a lotus in each hand. If shown separately then he carries a *padma* in his right hand only; Paurabheya Subrahmanya 8-armed, sits on a lotus pedestal. His right hand carries a lotus flower or flowery arrows; Brahmachari 2-armed, stands on a lotus; Valliamma carries a lotus flower in her left hand; Shri and Bhu devi are supposed to carry a lotus flower; Saraswati sits or stands on a lotus and holds a lotus flower; Brahma sits on a lotus, born from the *nabhi-kamala* of Vishnu; Ganesha sits on a lotus; Surya holds two full-blown lotus flowers in his two hands.

In *Matsya Purana* amongst the flowers meant for worship is the lotus. Lotus is mentioned in all the volumes of the epic *Ramayana*.<sup>146</sup> The heart is compared to the lotus flower and naturally, therefore, takes precedence over all other flowers as temple offerings and that explains the frequent sculpture of lotus flower on temples. The *Panchavimsa Brahmana* states that the lotus flower is born of the light of the *Nakshatras*, and *Atharvaveda*



Plate No. 158

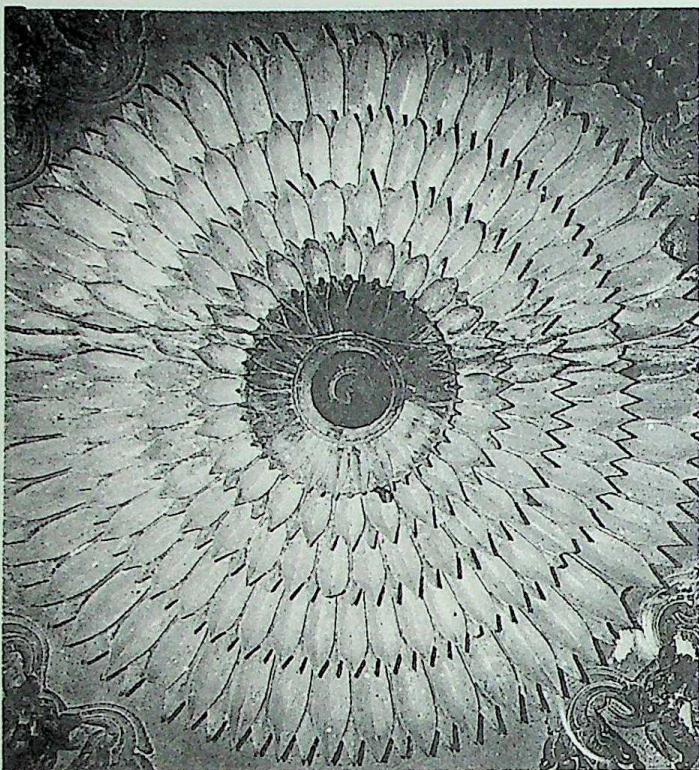


Plate No. 159

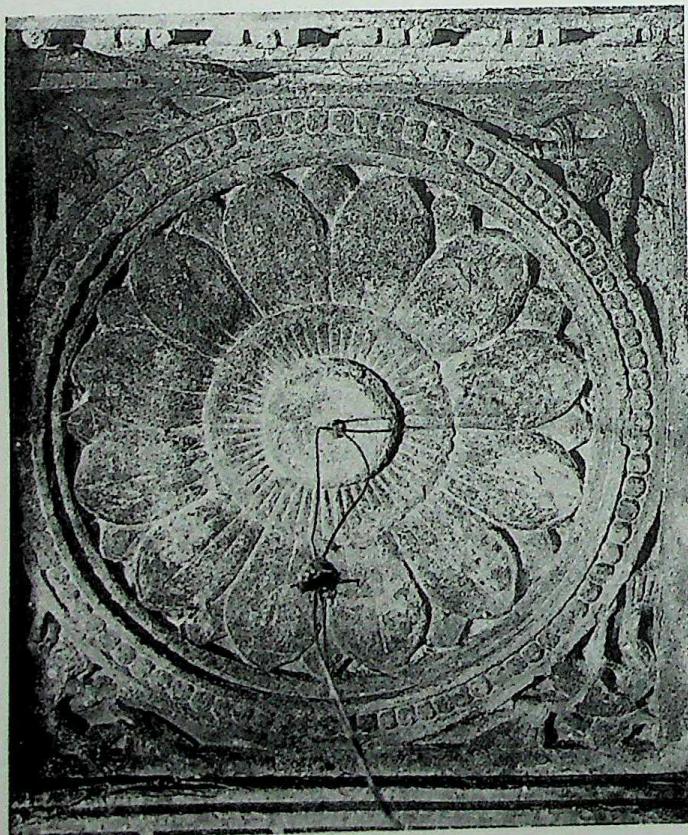


Plate No. 160

compares the human heart to the lotus.<sup>147</sup>

Often a 5-petalled lotus symbol called the *Siddha Cakra* is sculpted on Jaina temples (pl.161). It is based on the concept of the *Panca Paramesthins* or the five Supreme ones in Jainism. These are (i) *Arhat* (Tirthankara); (ii) *Siddha*; (iii) *Acharyas* (heads of a particular group of monks and nuns and their devotees—a *gana* or a *gaccha* or a *kula*; (iv) *Upadhyaya* (monks who read and explain the scriptures; and (v) *Sadhus* (ordinary monks).

“In a lotus symbol, four dignitaries would be conceived or represented on four petals of the lotus, one in each direction . . . with the *Arhat* or *Tirthankara* in the centre . . . from very early times these five were the Supreme objects of Jaina worship. At some later stage, four more objects were introduced on the lotus petals intervening the lotus petals of the four corners of the eastern, southern, western and northern directions. These are, according to the *Svetambara* sect the conception of *Jnana* (Right knowledge), *darsana* (Right faith), *Caritra* (Right conduct), and *tapas* (Right penance).”<sup>148</sup>

As mentioned earlier, there is no 5-petalled lotus in nature but the 5-petalled flower in its symbolism is referred as such.

The railing pillars round the temple complex at Buddhist sites such as Bodh Gaya, Bharhut, Sanchi and those found near Mathura all have lotus medallions sculpted on them. Though the depiction is usually realistic, sometimes the sculptor has used his imagination and the flowers do not exactly resemble the lotus flower.

In conclusion one can say that whereas most Vishnu temples and Buddhist shrines have lotus flowers sculpted either as pure decoration or as a part of the iconography or a pastoral scene, the use of the lotus flower in the *shaiva* temples is not very common. Whereas the lotus flower is sculpted as a *padma-asana* in most temples, lotus plant complete with leaves, buds, flowers and the seed bearing receptacle are not seen in temples of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh by the author except for the Buddhist shrines of Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.

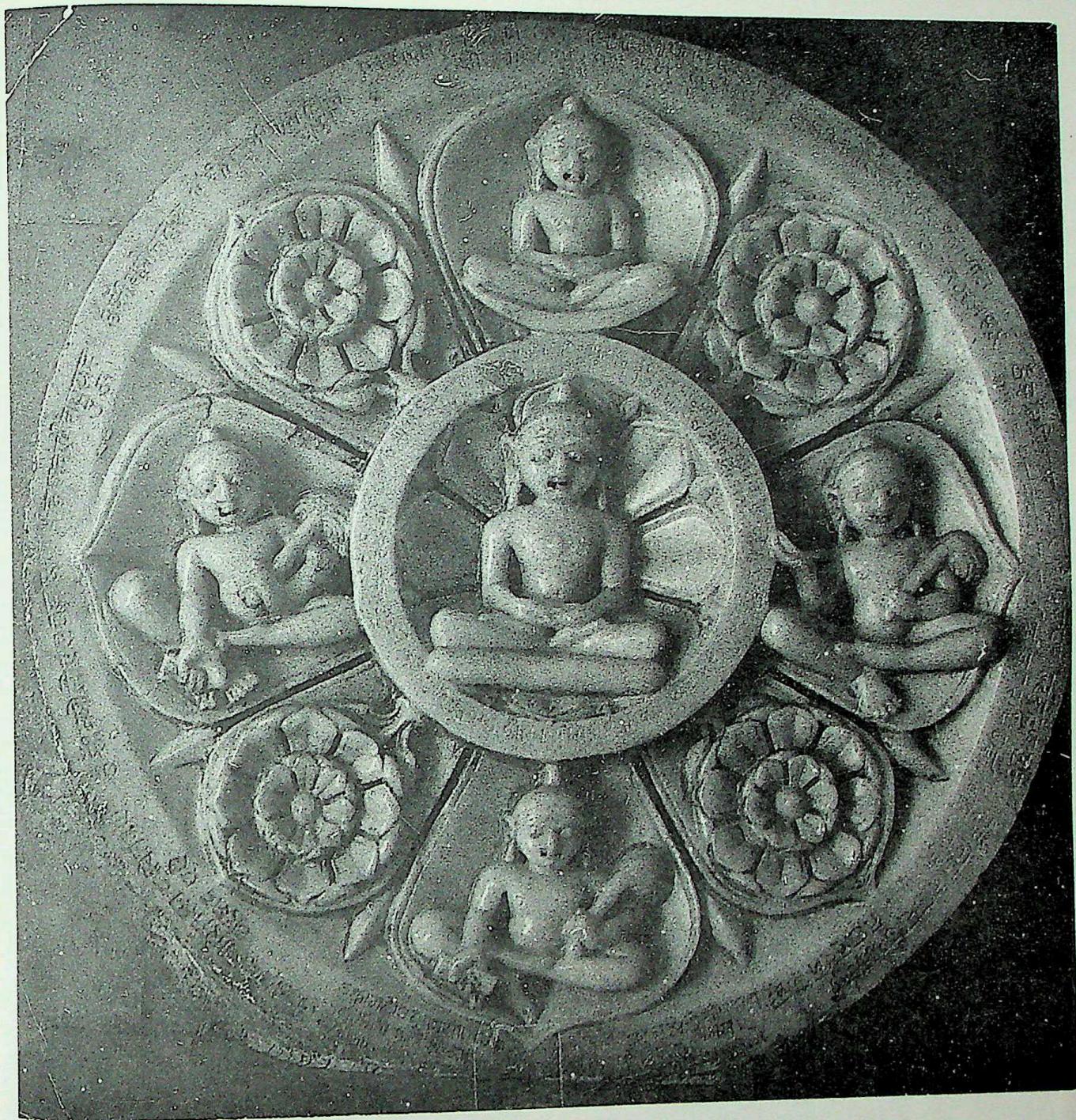


Plate No. 161

## NYMPHAEA STELLATA Willd.

Compared to the depiction of the lotus, the depiction of *Nilotpala*, the blue water-lily, also called *Neel-Kamal* (the blue lotus) is comparatively rare except in the hands of deities. In plate 162, Maitreya is seen standing on a lotus pedestal with a male and a female attendant. He is wearing a *dhoti*, a jewelled crown, ornaments and is holding in his left hand three stalks of the *Nilotpala* flowers. The stalks of the flowers are arising in the axil of a bract which in turn is present at a node of the stalk. In the *Ardhanarishwara murti* of Shiva and Parvati at Brihadishvara temple, Thanjavur, one hand of Parvati holds a *Nilotpala* flower. Same is true of Parvati half of the *Ardhanarishwara murti* in the temple of Mukhalingam and this iconography of Parvati is mentioned in the *Silparatna* and *Saivite Agamas*. Four-armed *Gangeya* is adorned with *Nilotpala* lilies; *Devasena* holds a *Nilotpala* flower stalk in her right hand; Shri and Bhu devi though supposed to hold a lotus flower, mostly are shown holding a *Nilotpala* flower; *Chandra* holds a *Nilotpala* in both hands as seen on the outer wall of the *garbha-griha*, Belur temple, Karnataka.



Plate No. 162



Plate No. 163

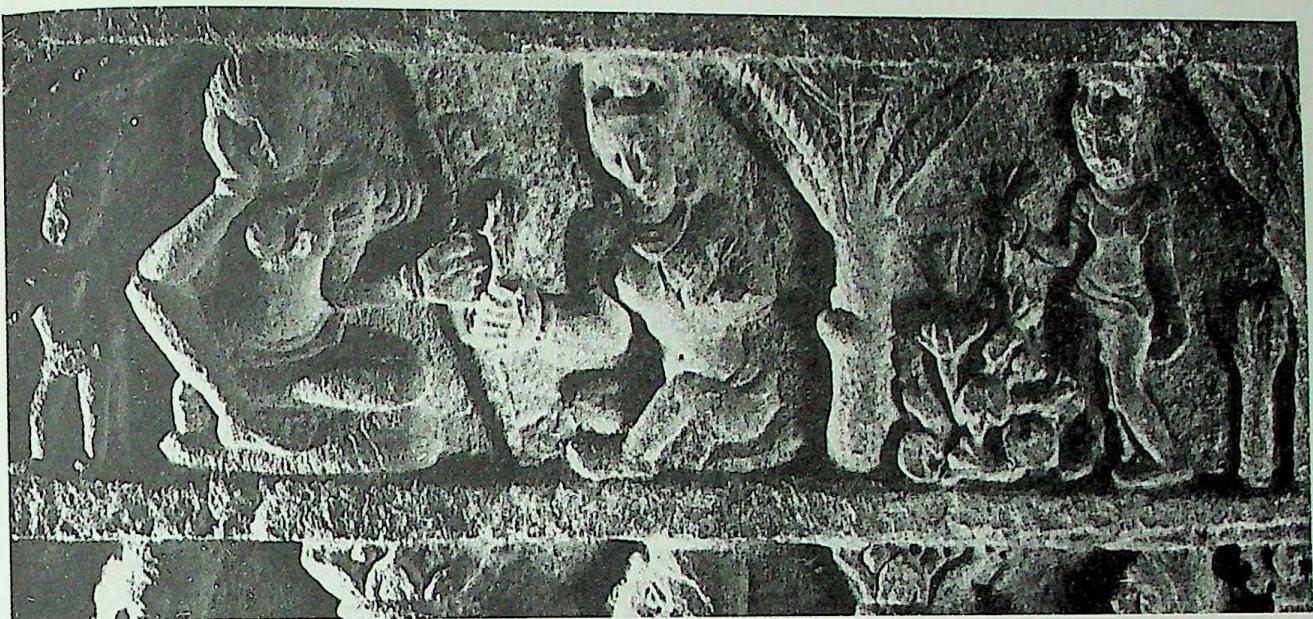


Plate No. 164

In *Matsya Purana* among the flowers mentioned as offerings in worship, include *Nilotpala* flowers.<sup>149</sup> In Valmiki's *Ramayana*,<sup>150</sup> the *Nilotpala* is frequently mentioned.

From Dedara, c.early 10th century A.D., Gujarat, is seen a decorative panel of stylised half-Nymphaea flowers. Plate 163 is from a pillar decoration in Mathura showing a round medallion on a pillar with a lotus flower in the middle surrounded by *Nilotpala* flowers. Mallikarjuna temple, Pattadkal, Karnataka has a sculpture of the entire plant of *Nymphaea* (pl.164). Even in the monoplane, the plant is unmistakably of *Nilotpala* with its orbicular leaves and flower stalks. A woman standing between two banana plants is also holding a bunch of *Nilotpala* flower stalks. From Mandasaur in Madhya Pradesh are two panels in one of which, a man (pl.203) is holding a *Nilotpala* flower stalk in his right hand and in the other, a woman is holding a *Nilotpala* flower stalk in her left hand. A large number of sculptures of sacred trees with a platform constructed under them have floral offerings lying on the platform which include the blue water Lily *Nilotpala* (pls.30,97,126).

### OCIMUM SANCTUM Linn.

*Tulasi-tulana-nastyataeva tulasi* i.e., nothing can equal the virtues of *Tulasi*, is a common saying. The plant is considered as the meeting point of heaven and earth.<sup>151</sup> *Tulasi* plant came out of the Ocean of Milk during *Amritamanthana* when it was churned for extracting (*amrita*), nectar by the titans and the celestials.<sup>152</sup> It is a herb revered all over India by the *vaishnavas* and also by the *shaivas* of Kerala. The *vaishnavas* consider the plant as a wife of Vishnu.<sup>153</sup> The plant is held in such great reverence that the Hindu marriage season is declared open only after a special *puja* is performed in front of the *Tulasi* plant on the eleventh day of *Kartika*. The plant considered as an incarnation of Lakshmi is ceremoniously married to Vishnu in his incarnation as the *Amalaka* tree, and only then the marriage season is declared open. Marriages stop being performed after *Ekadashi* in the month of *Ashadha*. There is a mention of the *Tulasi* plant in the *Vishnu purana*, *Shiva Purana*, *Padma Purana*, *Vayu Purana* and *Brahmavaivarta Purana*.

The *Tulasi* plant is considered so important that women pray to it for the safe return of their husbands and sons from a journey. Young maidens worship the plant on the full moon day of *Ashwina* for getting a desirable husband. The plant is called *bhutagni* and planted in the house so that no evil spirits come near it.<sup>154</sup> With such



Plate No. 165

### PANDANUS ODORATISSIMUS Linn.f.

*Ketaki* (*Keura*, Screw Pine) is a much branched small monoecious tree or thick bush with long, dark green spirally arranged, close, erect leaves, with leaf margins toothed like a saw. Spathes are white or creamy white and female spadix is cone-shaped. The plant is distributed along the coast of India particularly in the Andaman islands, as well as planted near canals, along rivers and streams of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The plants are planted for their fragrant flowers which appear from April to May.

*Ketaki* flowers are mainly associated with Shiva and his family and all the text references are to him. According to a popular legend, Shiva was playing a game of dice with Parvati. Parvati defeated him. Shiva resented being defeated by a woman and hid in the *Ketaki* forest. To forget his humiliation, he got absorbed in deep meditation. Parvati sensed the reason for his sulking and approached him but Shiva with his eyes closed did not see her. Parvati then approached him wearing *Ketaki* flowers in her hair and Shiva was attracted by the sweet scent of the flowers. He opened his eyes and realising that it was the scent of the *Ketaki* flowers that was responsible for disturbing his meditations, he cursed them never to be offered in worship.<sup>155</sup>

A legend in the *Siva Purana* relates how Shiva manifested himself in the *Linga* form. During the lifeless interval of dissolution and creation, Vishnu in his anthropomorphic form was floating on the primeval waters when he perceived another luminous being approaching him with great speed. This was the four-headed creator Brahma who enquired of Vishnu, "Who are you? I am the first progenitor and create all. But how did you originate?"

Vishnu was annoyed at the audacity of Brahma and begged to differ and said that he was the Creator and Destroyer of the Universe. A quarrel arose between them, each contesting to be the Creator. They kept on arguing in the Timeless void under the starless sky when they saw arising out of the ocean, a towering *Lingam* crowned with flames. Vishnu and Brahma were so struck with amazement at this apparition that they forgot their quarrel. Vishnu took the form of a boar and in search of the lower end of the *Lingam*, entered the netherworld called *Patala*. He continued to go deeper and deeper into the ocean but the *lingam* grew bigger and bigger

strong beliefs, one expected the plant to be frequently sculpted on temples. But most of the depictions are highly stylised with no resemblance to the living plant.

In most Hindu homes there is a raised concrete *mandapa* in which the *Tulasi* plant is grown and worshipped daily by watering the plant and lighting a lamp before it in the evening. In pl.165 there is a *Tulasi Mandapa* in which a plant is growing in very much the same way as it is in the present age and also being worshipped in the same way. The panel shows two persons, a man and a woman worshipping the plant. The shape of the leaves suggests it to be *Tulasi* plant even though they have been made outsized perhaps to emphasize the importance of the plant. The leaves of the plant resemble *Tulasi*. The two people worshipping it are standing on the same level as the base of the *mandapa* which shows the plant to be much smaller than the impression one gets at first sight.

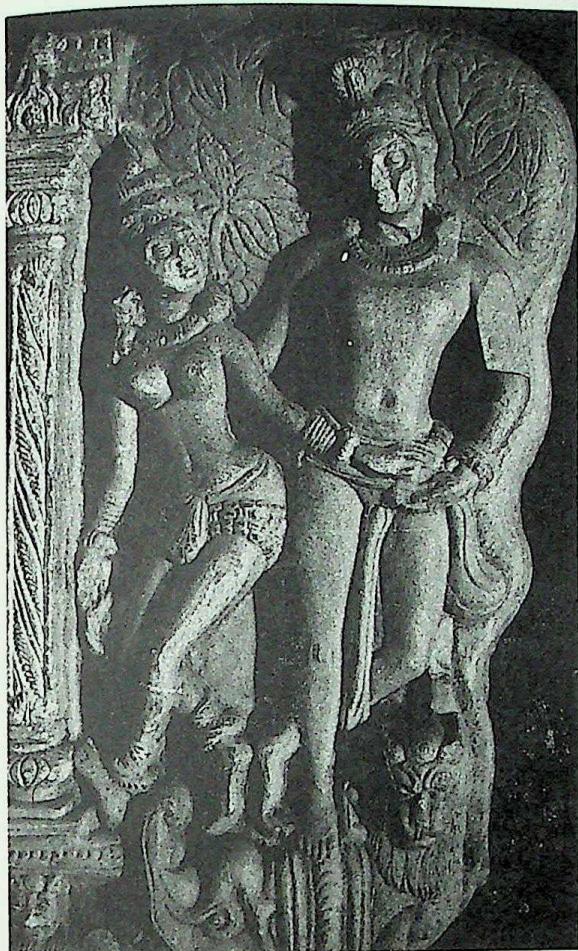
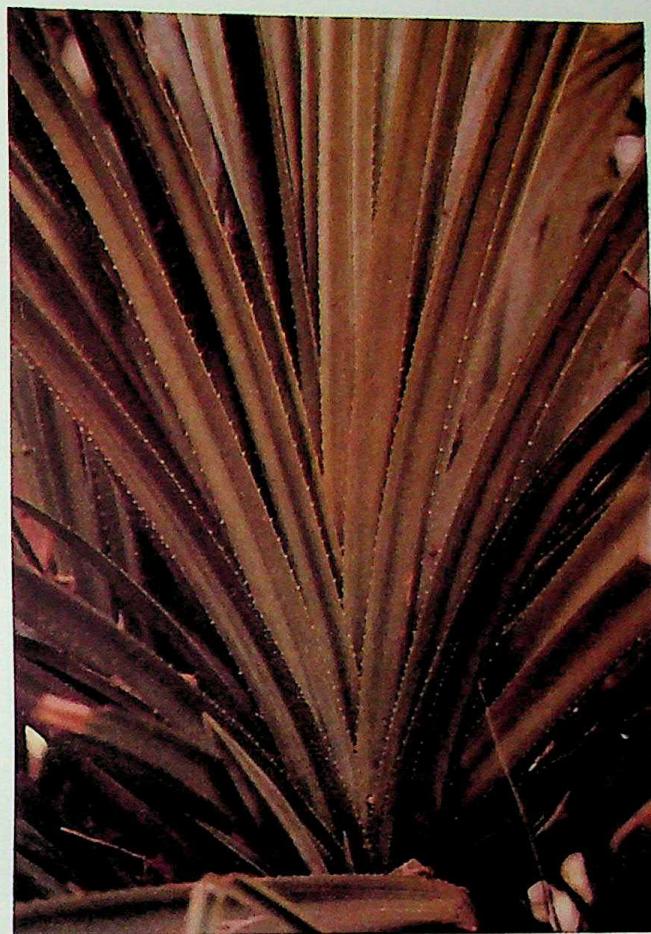


Plate No. 166



*Pandanus odoratissimus* Linn. f.

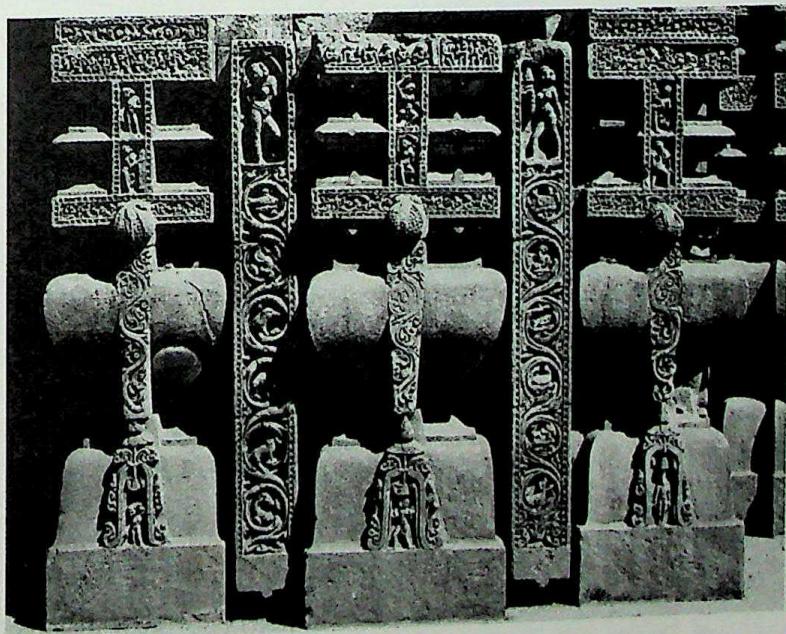


Plate No. 167



Plate No. 168

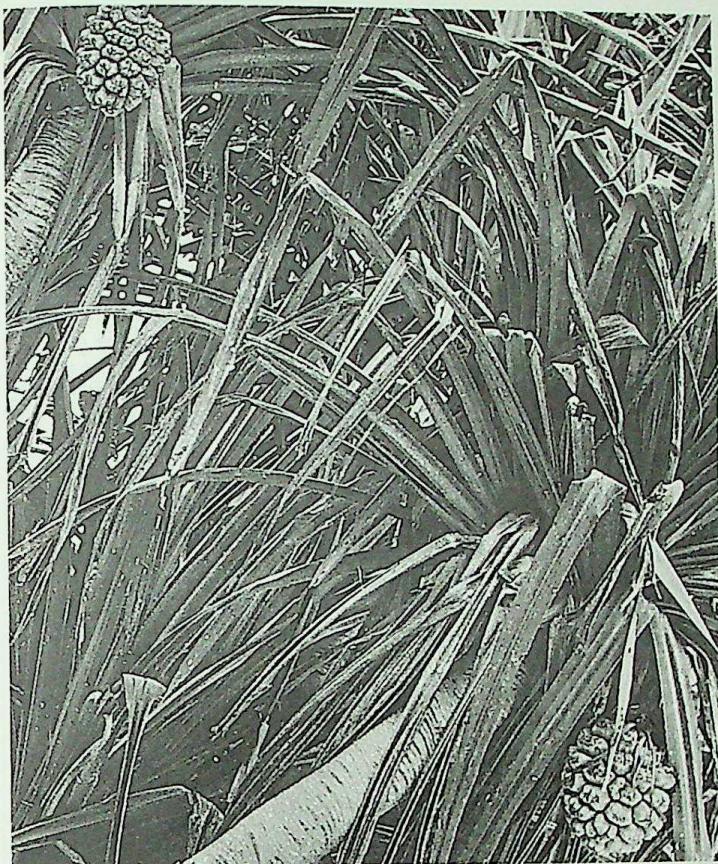
and Vishnu could not find its lower end. Brahma met with a similar fate. He, in the form of a swan flew high into the heavens trying to find its upper limit, but could not reach it. They both returned from their pre-assigned missions and stood gazing with amazement at the evergrowing *Lingam*. Then the side of the *Lingam* burst open and in its niche was standing Shiva who announced that he was their progenitor, the Supreme Shiva who was the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. He said that Brahma was his right side and Vishnu his left and they both exist in him.

When Vishnu and Brahma returned after their futile attempt at finding the height and the depth of the *Lingam*, Vishnu admitted his defeat but Brahma told a lie and said that he had reached the height of the *Lingam*. In defence he produced the *Ketaki* flower as a witness. Shiva cursed the *Ketaki* flower for bearing false witness and said that its flowers would never be offered in worship.<sup>156</sup>

Except for the flowers of *Champaka* and *Ketaki*, there is no flower which does not please Shiva.<sup>157</sup> When Ganesha the son of Shiva was crowned as the chief of the Ganas, he was worshipped by his devotees with vermillion, sandal paste, raw rice grains and *Ketaki* flowers.<sup>158</sup> *Ketaki* flowers that were cursed by Shiva and forbidden in his worship are offered in the worship of Ganesha, a contradiction regarding the sacredness of the *Ketaki* flower. In *Siva Purana*, Shiva does not like them. In other texts he is mentioned as being adorned with the *Ketaki* flowers. Gudimallan *murti* of Shiva is said to have *Ketaki* flowers in his head dress. But the present author could not see them as the details of the head dress gave got eroded.

According to Masthanaiah, "The *Suprabhedagama* gives the description of an 8-armed figure of the Goddess and states that her hands should hold conch, wheel, trident, bow, arrow, sword, noose and *Ketaki* flowers."<sup>159</sup>

*Vishnudharmottara* and the *Saiva Agamas* mention that Chamunda should have many hands in which she should hold: *Musala*, shield, arrow, goad, sword, noose, bow, hatchet, danda, and the *Ketaki* flower.<sup>160</sup> Parvati also holds a *Ketaki* flower.<sup>161</sup> But according to Panigrahi, earlier images of Parvati hold a *Ketaki* flower but later images hold a *Nilotpala* Flower.<sup>162</sup>



Pandanus odoratissimus Linn f.

Plate No. 169

Pandanu plant is indigenous to the coastline of India but is depicted mainly on the temples of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. The plant is quite inhospitable with its prickly leaves and inspite of it, the depiction of the tree is associated with either an amorous couple standing under it or a *vrikshaka*. The tree is depicted in very early temples for instance the sculpture of a couple standing under the *Ketaki* tree (pl.166). Randhawa has identified this floral motif as *Michelia champaca*.<sup>163</sup> This identification would have been acceptable if the whorl of leaves on the periphery of the cone-shaped structure would have been tepals. Tepals and petals do not have a midrib, it being the characteristic of leaves. The long elliptical leaves of Pandanus are clear and in the centre is the cone-shaped fruit of *Ketaki* and not the gynophore of *Michelia champaca*.

The fruit of *Ketaki*, is sculpted on the *Vedibandha* of the Brahmeshvara temple, Bhubaneshwar (pl.167), as well as on Harsh Mata temple, Abaneri. It is an unusual depiction as the plant does not grow in Rajasthan and if it is cultivated there, it does not bear fruit.

*Vrikshakas* under the *Ketaki* plant are seen mainly from Uttar Pradesh and in the vicinity of Mathura. Plate 168 shows a *Vrikshaka*, a nude woman wearing a heavily ornamented, jewelled waist-girdle called *Mekhala*. She is standing under the *Ketaki* tree with her legs crossed, her body in a slight *tribhanga* style and her feet resting on a crouching figure, a dwarf or a demon. The tree is bearing a bunch of cones. Another *Vrikshaka* found at Jamalpur Tila and housed in the Mathura museum, dated 1st-2nd century A.D. is also under the *Ketaki* tree. She is holding in her hand a bird in a manner which gives the impression that she is playing a flute. Inspite of it being a damaged sculpture, the Pandanus leaves are clear. The best depiction of the *Ketaki* plant is seen in plate 169. The woman wearing an unusual head-dress is semi-nude, heavily ornamented and is holding a branch of the tree.

The lower portion of the figure is broken but from what is visible, one can visualise that she must be standing in the *tribhanga* style with one arm holding a branch of the tree and the other akimbo, the usual stance of a *Vrikshaka*. This sculpture has been identified by Randhawa as *Michelia champaca*.<sup>164</sup> Not only the Pandanus leaves are clear with their prominent midribs and venation, but also has a bunch of cone-shaped fruits. *Michelia* flowers have a single gynophore and not a bunch of cones.



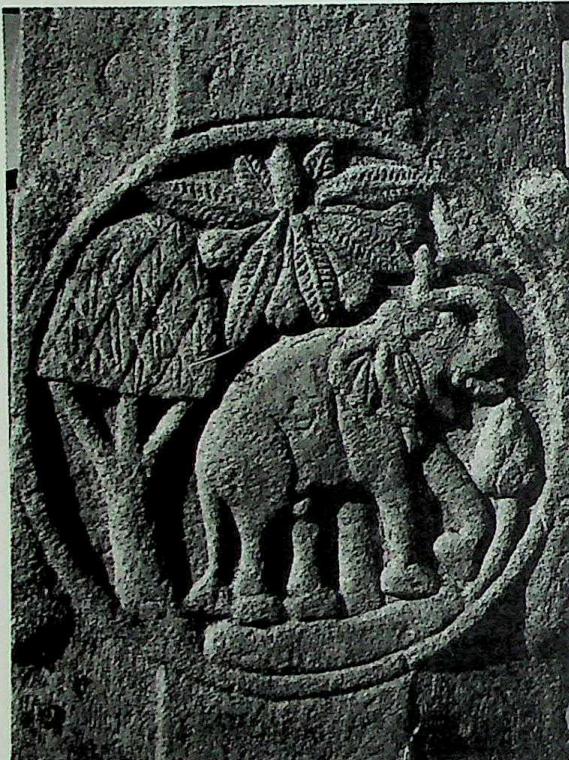


Plate No. 170



Plate No. 171

### PARKIA BIGLANDULOSA Wight & Arn. and PARKIA ROXBURGHII Linn.

One of the most unusual floral motifs is of the Parkia palm. Both the species of Parkia are sculpted on Buddhist *Stupas* but only a single representation of each species. *Parkia biglandulosa* known as *Sivalinga mara* in Kannada, is a tall, handsome evergreen tree, native of Malaya. It has large bipinnate leaves with numerous small leaflets. Flowers are in globular heads which hang on long peduncles, small, velvety-brown at first, later turning white. *Parkia roxburghii* known as *Khorial zango* in Assamese is a medium-sized to tall tree, a native of Assam but mainly cultivated in gardens. It has large bipinnate leaves with numerous curved leaflets. Flowers are in dense turbinate or clavate heads. Fruits are yellowish to dark brown, pods hanging on long peduncles.

The first species of *Parkia* mentioned is a native of Malaya and the second one is cultivated in Assam. But they are sculpted at Sanchi and Amaravati *Stupas* respectively, both places at a great distance from Assam. Parkia species do not grow in the wild state in India nor do they have any religious significance to be sculpted on temples. Their depiction, therefore, is purely decorative. Plate 170 shows an elephant standing before a large sized lotus bud under a tree of *Parkia biglandulosa*. In plate 171, the depiction is of a *Parkia roxburghii* which has large pinnate leaves with curved leaflets. The panel shows a man and a woman under the tree. These sculptures from the Buddhist shrines show very clearly the club-shaped inflorescence and fruits which alternate with the pinnate leaves.

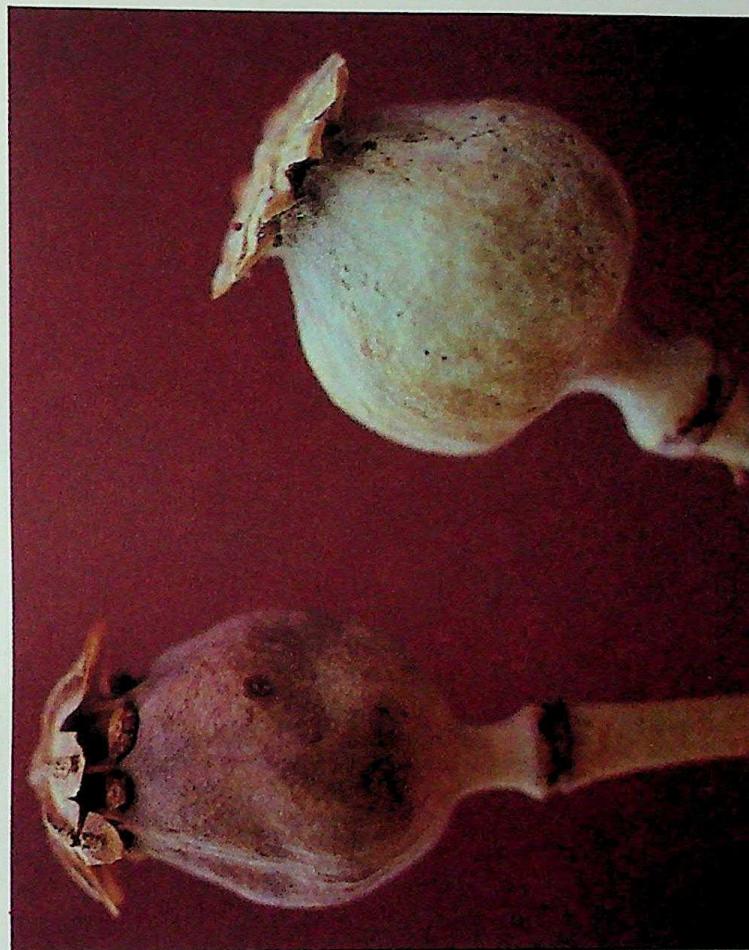
## PAPAVER SOMNIFERUM Linn.

Poppy plant is an erect, sparsely branched, 1-2 m. high plant with annual, glaucous leaves which are ovate-oblong or linear-oblong, dentate or serrate; flowers are pinkish, white and mauve; fruits globose, stalked capsules with white or black seeds. The stalks of the capsules are unbranched and very long.

The capsules of poppy are sculpted on Bharhut medallions as a side ornamentation. A male or a female figure is often seen standing on them (pl.58). In plate 109, poppy capsules are sculpted facing downwards and garlands hanging from them.

Whereas the depiction of the stalked capsules of poppy with a crown from under which the poppy seeds are dispersed are very clear, sometimes the sculpture of the pod resembles the seed pod of lotus to which it has great resemblance when sculpted in the monoplane and this often creates uncertainty regarding its identification, particularly so when the lotus seed bearing receptacle sculpted along with the lotus plant, resembles the poppy capsule.

Papaver somniferum Linn.



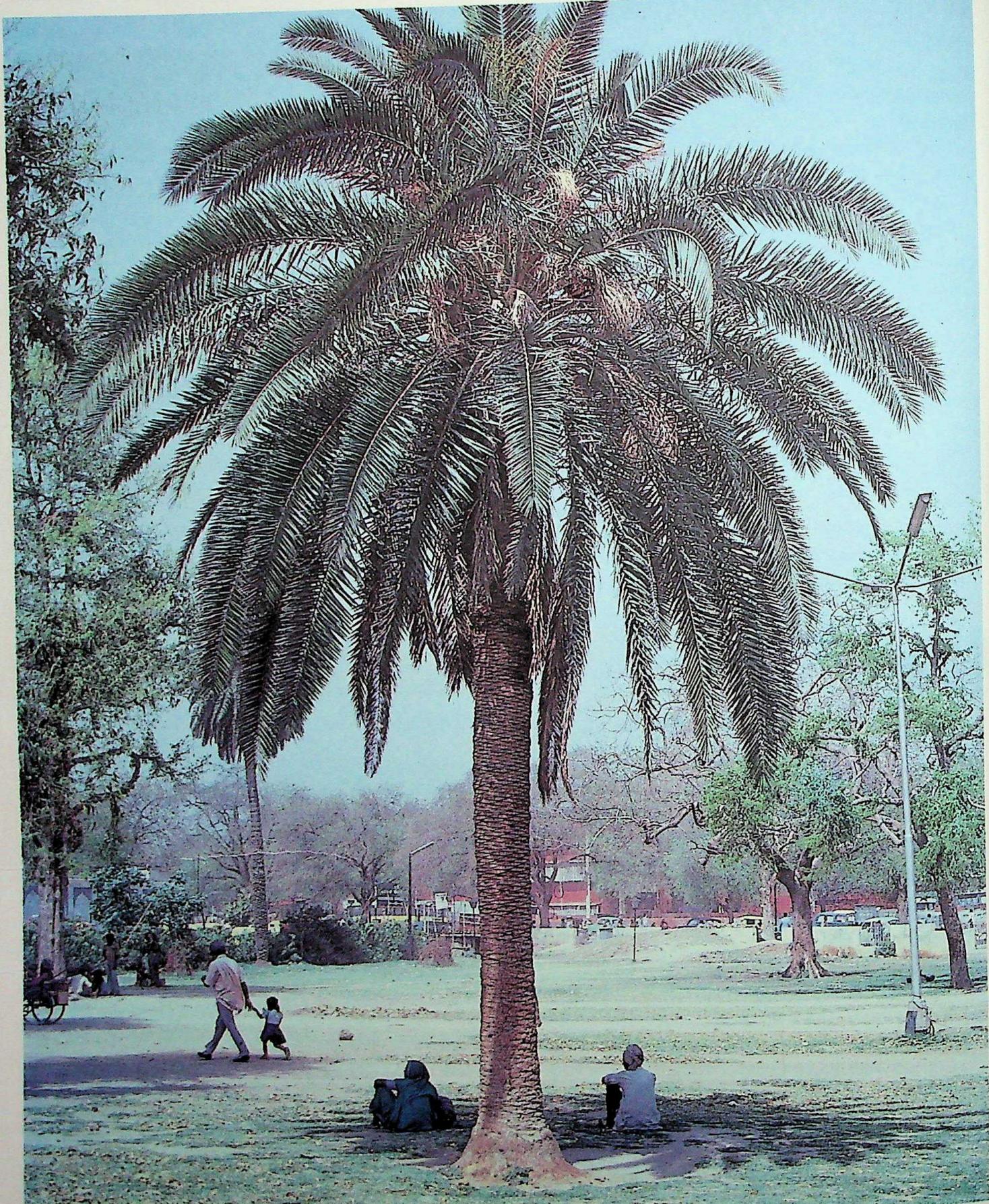
## PHOENIX DACTYLIFERA Linn.

Date palm is a tall dioecious tree with long feather like pinnate leaves 2-3 m. long forming a thick crown. The columnar tree trunk is slightly bent reaching a height of 19 m. or more. It is covered with remnants of persistent leaf bases forming a diamond shaped design. Fruit, a one-seeded berry is oblong-elliptical in shape, orange-yellow to reddish-brown in colour. The tree flowers from March to April and fruits from August to October. Date palm is found in tropical and sub-tropical parts of Africa and Asia. It has been introduced into India since a long time but is grown to a small extent only.

The tree has no sacred significance but there is a reference to it. As a part of the ancient name (*Kharjuravahaka*) of Khajuraha, it is mentioned in an 11th century Chandel inscription.

Date palm is more commonly found on temple wall paintings and frescoes. It is rarely sculpted but two very good depictions of it are seen at Nagarjunakonda (pl.172) and at Sanchi (pl.173). Both the sculptures are life like showing a bunch of pinnate leaves at the top of the slightly bent columnar tree trunk. In both the sculptures, bunches of flowers and fruits can be seen. Plate 172 shows a *chaitya* in the background in the door way of which is a woman carrying a trayful of offerings. Outside the *chaitya*, on the right is the figure of Cakravartin. On the upper left is a Date palm.

Plate 173 shows a pastoral scene with three buffaloes and two deer in front of a Date Palm. Two parrots are pecking at the dates. In plate 172, the diamond-shaped design made by the remnants of the persistent leaf bases is clear while in plate 173, this design is visible in only a portion of the tree trunk, and the rest shows more horizontal lines. This does happen sometimes in nature and could also be due to the corroding of the stone.



*Phoenix dactylifera* Linn.

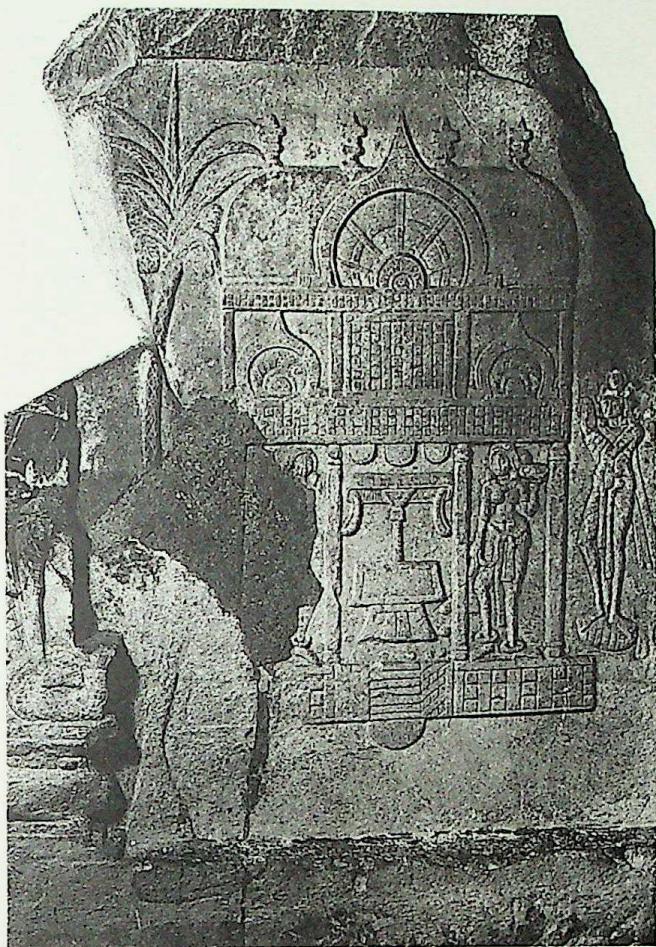


Plate No. 172

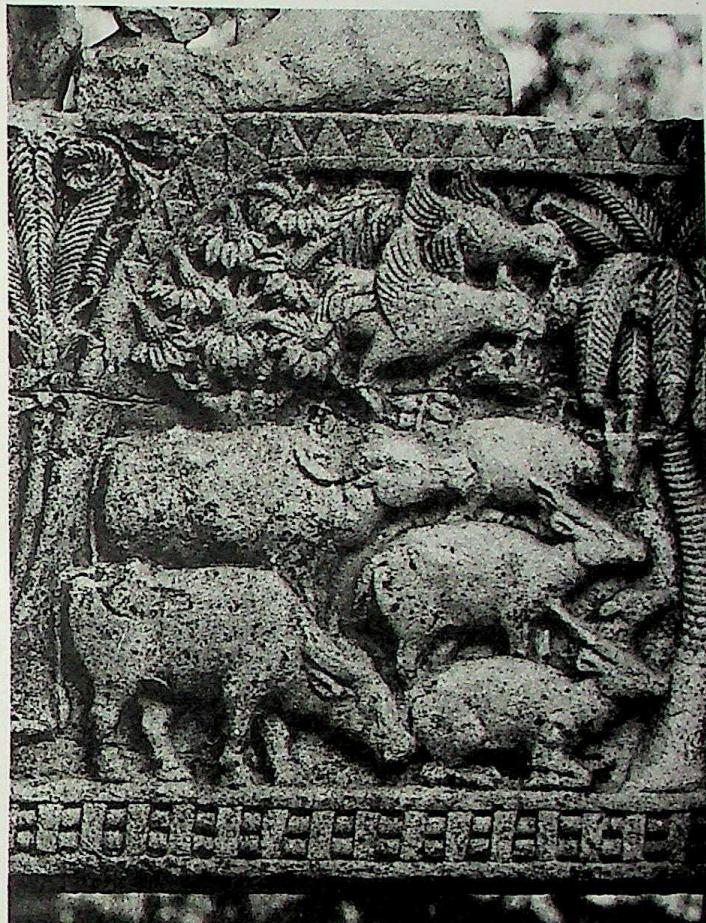


Plate No. 173

### PIPER BETLE Linn.

*Nagavalli* or the Betel Vine is a perennial, dioecious creeper cultivated in hot and damp parts of India, Sri Lanka and extending up to the Malay Islands. Its stem is semi-woody, climbing by short adventitious roots; leaves are long and broadly ovate, slightly cordate, shortly acuminate with an acute apex. It is yellowish or bright green in colour with an entire, often an undulate margin. The cultivated betel in India is the male plant.

Betel leaves are considered sacred for Hanuman and Shiva worship. Whereas Hanuman is offered a garland made of betel leaves in Tamil Nadu, normally only the leaves are offered at *shaiva* shrines. Betel leaves are also considered essential for many other forms of worship. The sacredness of the Betel leaf can be seen from its frequent mention in the *Siva Purana* where it is said that for the worship of Shiva, 'Namaskar, a sacrifice of the soul, shall be performed according to ability. Sacrificial food and Betel leaves should be offered to Shiva.<sup>165</sup> Elsewhere it says that six good Betel leaves should be offered to Shiva.<sup>166</sup> Siva (*linga*) was installed (in a temple) and worshipped with various articles which included flowers, betel leaves, camphor, sandal paste, *Aguru*, unguents, etc.<sup>167</sup>

Betel leaf motif was seen at the following temples: Shankara-Narayanaswamy kovil, Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu where a row of betel leaves are sculpted one above the other on a wall above a *Siva-linga*. Nellairappa temple of Shiva, 7th century A.D., Tirunelveli city temple and Meenakshi-Sundaresvara temple,



Betel leaf Vine

Madura both pillar decorations. In Meenakshi temple the undulating Betel vine with three large heart-shaped leaves are visible (pl.174). In Koodal Alagar Vishnu temple in Madura district, Tamil Nadu, Betel leaves are sculpted forming rows of ornamental decoration; similar Betel leaf sculptures are also present in Ranakpur Jain temples of Rajasthan and Vithal temple, Hampi, Karnataka. Whereas in plate 174, the whole betel vine is sculpted showing the curving stem and the cordate-shaped leaves, at Lakshmi-Narasimha temple, Namakkal, Tamil Nadu, two betel leaves one above the other are sculpted forming a decorative design (pl.175).

At a casual glance the betel leaf motif could be mistaken for the *Ashvattha* leaf except that the *Ashvattha* leaf apex is much more prolonged as compared to the betel leaf. *Ashvattha* leaf is borne on trees and the betel leaf grows on a creeper. Whereas the betel leaf is held sacred for Shiva and normally is depicted on Shaiva temples, *Ashvattha* leaf is not associated with Shiva worship.

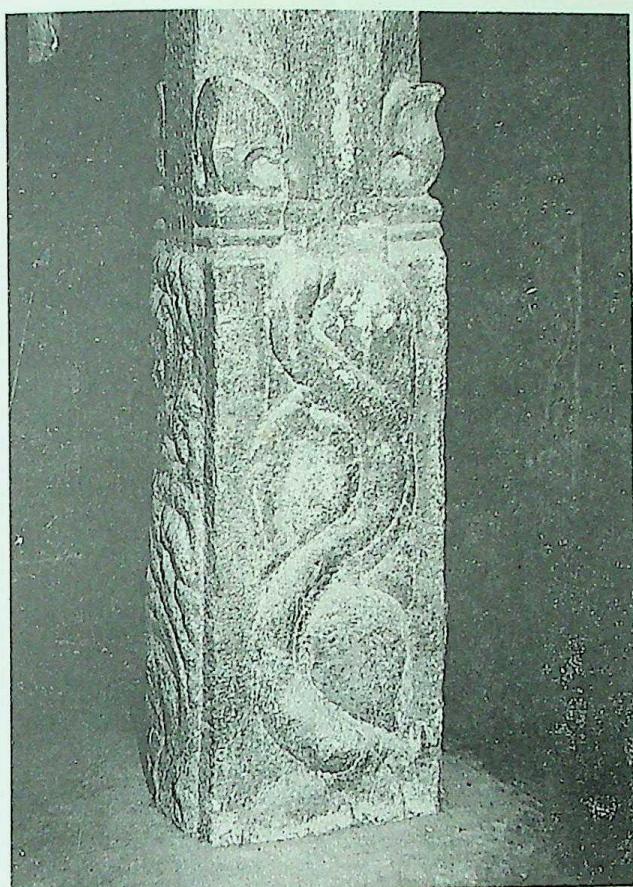


Plate No. 174

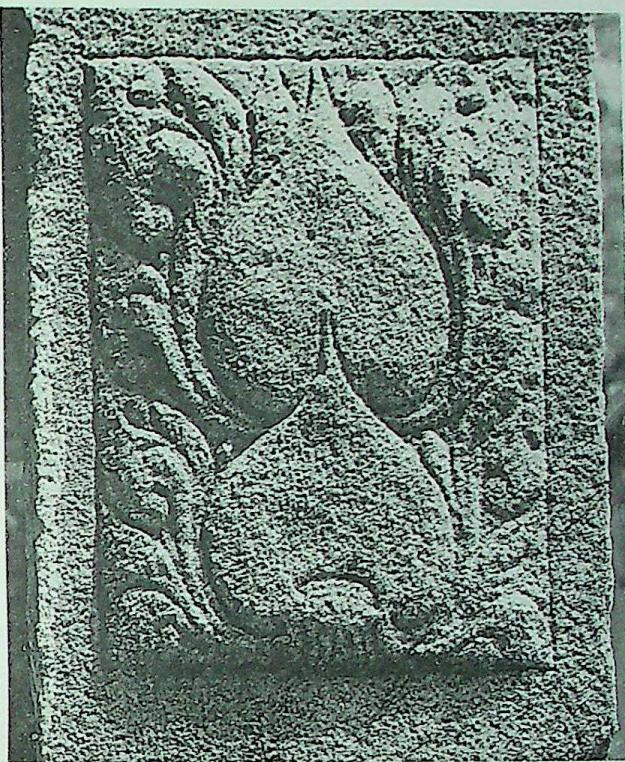


Plate No. 175

### PLUMERIA ACUMINATA Ait.

*Champa* is a common name of many plants. *Plumeria acuminata*, the *Champa* tree is short sized tree with dichotomous branching in the upper portion. The leaves are large and elliptical and tend to aggregate towards the tips of the branches where the flowers are present in a bunch. The normal number of petals in a flower are five but sometimes the number varies from 4 to 7 in the same bunch.

To the Hindus and the Buddhists, the tree is a symbol of immortality because of its extraordinary capacity of continuing to produce flowers and leaves even after it has been uprooted. It is frequently planted near the temples and the ground under the tree gets covered with the creamy white flowers which fall from the tree. *Champa* flowers are offered at temples.

According to a legend, a Frenchman travelled far and near in search of ways of getting rich quickly. He was advised to look for a tree whose flowers were the colour of the moon, whose fragrance overwhelmed the soul and which grew near the temples. He went to a temple in South India at midnight on a full moon night when the scent of the flowers was in the air and as advised shook the tree in the hope of the tree shedding gold coins. The flowers fell in a heap, glistening like gold coins in the moonlight and the sweet scent of the flowers turned his thoughts towards god. He realised the wisdom of real riches in life, the beauty of sweet smelling flowers, the moonlit nights, the immortal skies, and he gave up the idea of amassing earthly riches.<sup>168</sup>

The depiction of *Champa* tree, *Plumeria acuminata*, complete with its prominent dichotomous branching, elliptical leaves and bunches of flowers is near perfect in the panel of Rishyasringa (pl.176). A slight variation is however, present perhaps due to the artisan's imagination, ignorance or to emphasize the presence of the



Plate No. 176



Plumeria acuminata Ait.

flowers. Instead of sculpting them at the end of the branch as it is in nature, they are shown higher up so that they are clearly visible. In the panel, Rishyasringa is standing bashfully under a tree of *Champa*. He was born with one horn on his head. According to a legend, sage Vibhandaka by his ascetic merit had gained the reputation of being a learned man and even as a small boy was respected by elderly men for his learning.

Vibhandaka once went to the shores of a lake for his meditations. There he saw *apsara* Urvashi of great beauty. Seeing her hair flowing in the breeze and her languorous, voluptuous pose, he was overcome by desire and his seminal fluid came out. A doe standing in the water, drank it along with the water and became pregnant. The doe was the daughter of the gods and had a boon from Brahma that she would regain her normal form when she gave birth to a saint. Since destiny had to follow the course ordained, and the words of the Creator could not be false, this doe gave birth to Vibhandaka's son, a human child but with a horn on his head. Rishyasringa right from the day of his birth was brought up as an ascetic. He practised austerities, was a strict Brahmacharin and considered a saint.<sup>169</sup>



Plate No. 177

## POLYALTHIA LONGIFOLIA Thw.

Though *Polyalthia* is called the *Ashoka* tree, it is not the *Ashoka* tree associated with the captivity of Sita mentioned in the epic *Ramayana*. The flowers of *Polyalthia longifolia* are insignificant looking, greenish in colour as compared to the flowers of Sita *Ashoka* (*Saraca asoca*) which are in bunches of orange-red coloured flowers. *Polyalthia* tree grows straight like a pillar whereas Sita *Ashoka* is a spreading tree. The leaves of *Polyalthia* droop down. In Plate 177, the tree of *Polyalthia longifolia* is sculpted under which a *yaksha* is standing. This is the solitary depiction of the tree one has come across. *Yakshas* are associated with practically all the trees and the presence of a *Yaksha* under it is not surprising. Usually with tree motif, a *vrikshaka* or a *yakshini* is associated, and not a male.

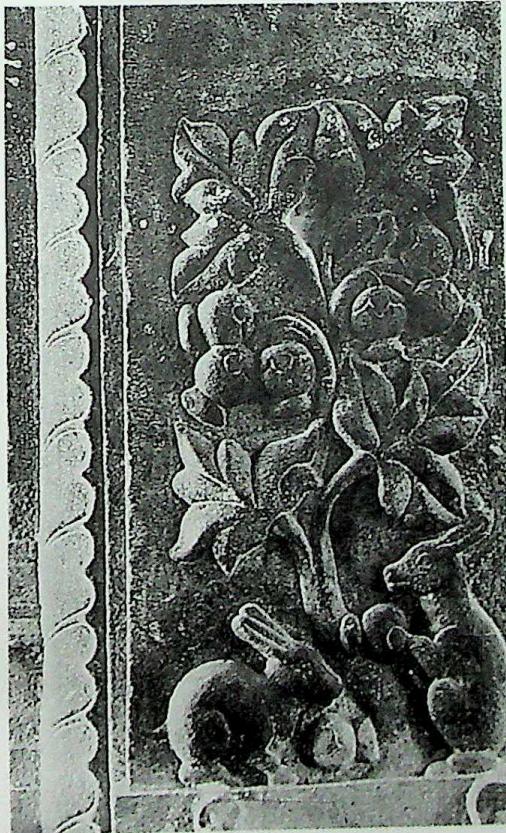
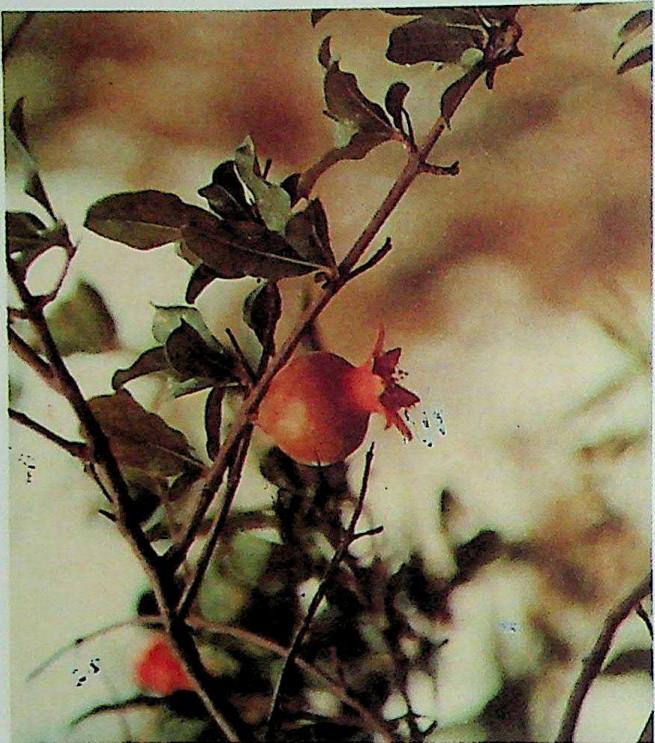


Plate No. 178

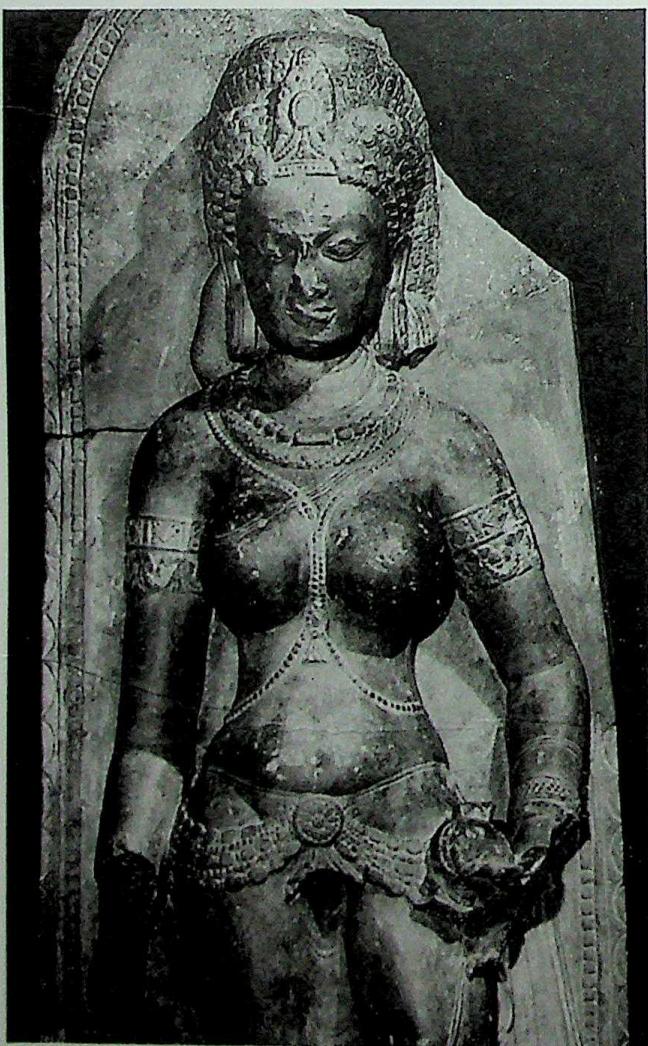
## PUNICA GRANATUM Linn.

Pomegranate fruits grow on a shrub or a small tree which has oblong, or ovate leaves and bright red flowers. Fruits are reddish-brown, globose, crowned with a characteristic persistent woody calyx. The fruit contains seeds which have an aril filled with acidic sweet juice. The tree is a native of Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. At present it grows wild in the warm valleys and outer hills of the Himalayas between 900-1,800 metres altitude. It has been cultivated throughout India and the Middle East for the past 5,000 years.

The pomegranate motif on temples is understandable when one reads the iconography of deities who are connected with it or the legends connected with it. Banerjea writes "... a four-armed goddess, standing figure of the medieval period found in Bengal shows the Goddess with her attributes as *Varamudra* or pomegranate, a *Siva-linga* a, *trisikha* in her hands, and iguana (*godhika*) carved on the pedestal."<sup>170</sup>



Punica granatum Linn.



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A legend relating to Skanda-Kartikeya mentioned in the *Siva Purana* is narrated by Shulman, "Narada won a pomegranate (*matulam*) from Brahma by playing music. He gave it to Shiva who promised it to whichever of his sons could go round the world in a moment. Murugan (Skanda) left Mt. Kailash on his peacock mount for the world of men, but Vinayaka went round the mother of all life and the Lord who pervades the universe and Shiva gave him the fruit."<sup>171</sup>

*Siva Purana* also mentions that waving of lights as part of the worship to be performed with camphor and *Arghya* should include a pomegranate.<sup>172</sup>

According to *Matsya Purana*, a pomegranate made of gold ought to be given in *Dakshina* to a poor Brahman with a large family, at the conclusion of a *vrata*, a vow kept for Shiva.<sup>173</sup> Earth personified as the goddess *Prithvi* holds in her left hand, a pomegranate.<sup>174</sup>

The pomegranate fruit is not very frequently sculpted. A pillar decoration in Jambukeshwar Shiva temple has a fruit laden tree sculpted with two rabbits eating the fruit. Rabbits are known for nibbling at the fruits that fall on the ground (pl.178). The fruits sculpted in this panel appear to be a sculptor's fancy of a brinjal fruit with its persistent Calyx (pl.209) but with a round protrusion at the upper end (which the brinjal fruits do not have). At a cursory glance the fruits resemble a pomegranate fruit but for the persistent Calyx at its base. Pomegranate fruits have a star-shaped protrusion at the top and not a round one. The tree can be listed as an unidentified. In Venkatachalapati temple of Vishnu, Krishnapuram, Tirunelveli, built in 1564 A.D. by Kumar Krishnappa Nayaka, a *Deva Kanika (Apsara)* doing Bharatanatyam in the Veerapanayakar *mandap* holds a pomegranate fruit in her left hand (the temple is at present in ruins). In the main hall of the Nellairappa Shiva temple in Tirunelveli city, is a sculpture of an *apsara* or Rati holding a pomegranate fruit. It is interesting to note that temples where pomegranate fruit sculptures are seen by the author are all in Tamil Nadu, except for the sculpture of Tara, 7th century A.D., a Buddhist deity from Sarnath who holds a pomegranate in her left hand (pl.179).

Plate No. 179

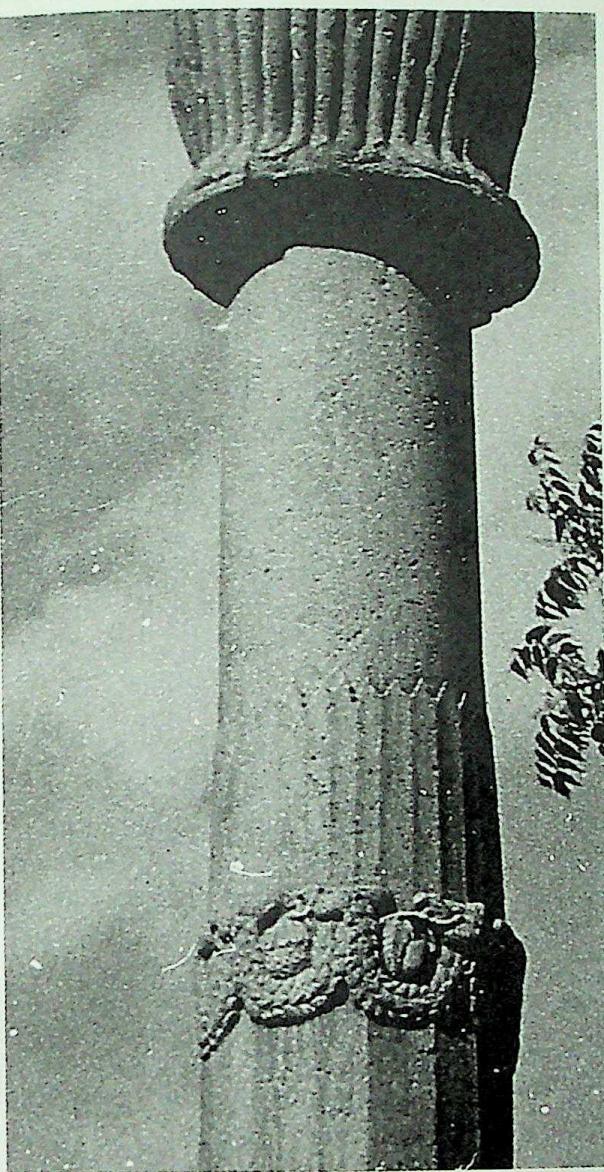


Plate No. 180

### RAPHANUS SATIVUS Linn.

Radish has a bulbous, conical tap root with a prominent hypocotyle from which a bunch of radical leaves arise above the ground. Both the root and the leaves are edible.

According to a legend, Ganesha was acting as a *dvarapala* at the residence of his parents Shiva and Parvati. Parashurama, a devotee of Shiva came on a visit. As Shiva and Parvati were resting, Ganesha prevented Parashurama from entering their apartments. Parashurama known for his bad temper, threw his axe, *Parashu* at Ganesha. Ganesha recognised the axe as belonging to his father and did not want it to fall on the ground and tried to hold it with his tusk resulting in the tusk breaking.

In most temple sculptures, Ganesha is shown with one tusk and the broken tusk is held in his hand. The tusk is unmistakable in its identity. But in a few sculptures, in place of the tusk, he is shown holding a radish which being conical resembles a tusk in shape, but it also has a tuft of radical leaves of the radish, complete with venation and arising from the hypocotyle (pl.181). A four-armed Ganesha is sitting on a seat in a temple niche and is holding a radish in his upper right hand and an axe in his upper left hand. His lower right hand is holding an *akshamala* while his lower left hand holds a bowl of *modakas* with his elephant trunk dipping into them.

### PYRUS COMMUNIS Linn.

The Heliodorus pillar erected by the Greek King's ambassador to commemorate his becoming a *vaishnava*, a follower of the Hindu God Vishnu, stands in Vidisha near Besnagar, Madhya Pradesh. The pillar stands in the middle of a concrete platform and has a wreath carved on its upper portion. In between the undulating wreath are sculpted various flowers and fruits. The pillar, also called *Khambh Baba* because of an old man who used to live near it at the time of its discovery, is an unusual pillar because of the depiction of a pear sculpted on it (pl.180). Bhandarkar identified it as a brinjal.<sup>175</sup> But the floral motif is most definitely of a pear. The brinjal is oval, round or elongated whereas the fruit depicted here has a pear shape. Along with the fruit is a leaf with a serrated margin as the pear leaf has, as against an undulating smooth margin of the brinjal plant.

The general belief is that the Pear plant is not indigenous to India. But the plant must have come to India at an early date as Hiuen T'siang, the Chinese pilgrim traveller-scholar who visited India in A.D. 630 and stayed till A.D. 645, has mentioned it in his writings among the food items he saw in India.<sup>176</sup>

The fruit must have been familiar to the artisans who made the Heliodorous pillar. But more likely it was the Greek influence that was responsible for its depiction, as the ornamental festoon consisting of floral strands and swags sculpted at the upper end of the pillar are typically Greek.

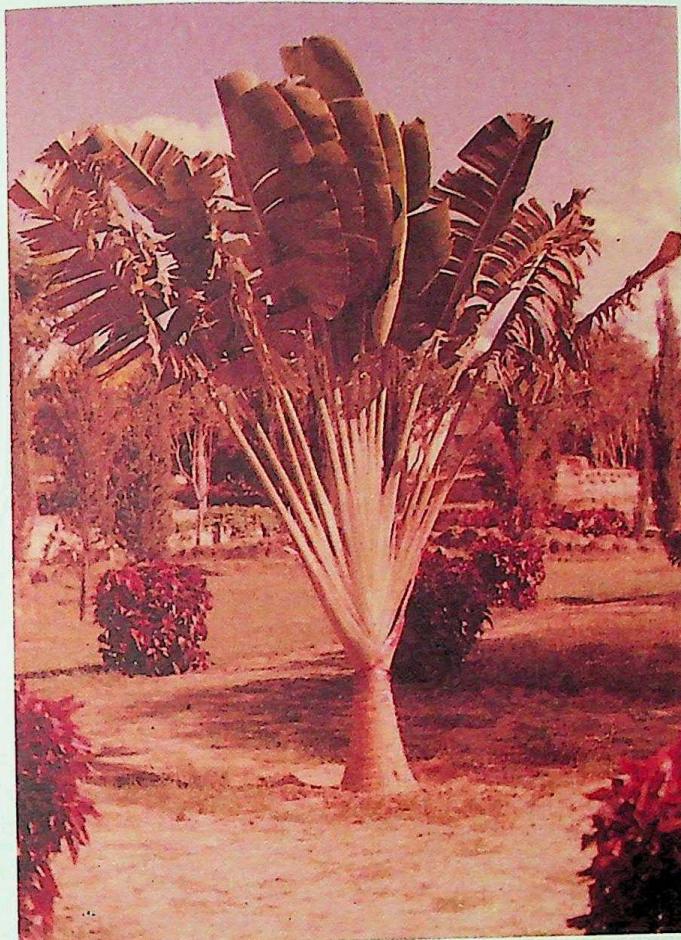


Plate No. 181

Installed above Ganesha in a smaller niche is a *Siva-linga* on a double petalled lotus. A radish in the hands of Ganesha is also seen in a temple at Kanpur, Bhadraka district, c.8th-14th century A.D., Orissa; Ganesha from Chedi, 10th century A.D., Madhya Pradesh and Ganesha from Somehsvara temple, Mukhalingam, Andhra Pradesh.

The presence of a radish in place of a tusk is borne out by textual evidence. Banerjea writes,<sup>177</sup> "The objects held by the hands being a hatchet (*parasu*) and a radish (*mulaka*) . . ."<sup>178</sup> "The Lord of the *Pramathas* (same as the *Ganas*) should be elephant-faced, pot-bellied, holding a hatchet and a radish, and should have one tooth. '*Pramathadhipo gajamukhah, prelambajatharah, kutharadharj syat Ekavisano bibhran-mulakajandam. . .*'"<sup>179</sup> "There is no mention of a pot of sweet-meats, but the 'radish' or the bulbous root (*Mulakakanda*) which is mentioned here is the edible of an elephant."

Iconographically and according to legend, Ganesha has the head of an elephant and since elephants eat radish, Ganesha holding a radish in one of his hands is quite understandable. It is important to note that Ganesha in these illustrations is holding a radish not along with a broken tusk but in place of it and holding it in the same manner.



Ravenala madagascariensis Sonn.

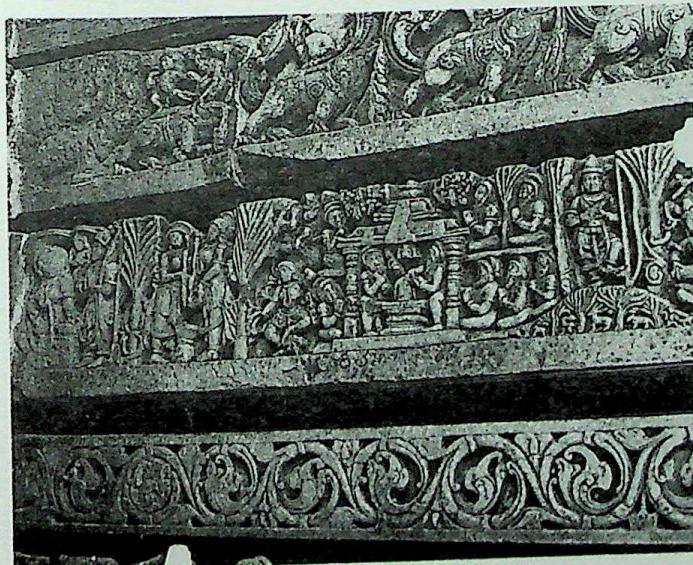


Plate No. 182

### RAVENALA MADAGASCARIENSIS Sonn.

*Ravenala*, the Travellers Palm is a tree like herb which is a native of Malagasy republic (Madagascar). In India it is cultivated as an ornamental plant for its elegant palm-like or fan-shaped leaves. Like the plantain plant it has a pseudostem and its flowers arise in compact clusters, enclosed in a bract. The fruit is a many-seeded capsule surrounded by a mass of bright blue or purple arils.

*Ravenala* has a strong resemblance to the banana plant but for its palm-like, fan-shaped leaves. The tree which is not native to India, is cultivated in gardens and does well on Indian soil. Since it is sculpted on 12th century A.D. Hoysaleshvara temple, Karnataka, the plant must have been naturalised in India by then. *Ravenala* has no sacredness about it and the depiction is purely ornamental (pl.182).





Plate No. 183

## RHODOSTACHYS PITCAIRNIAEFOLIA Ben & Hook.

Plate 183 shows Rati, the wife of Kamadeva, the Hindu god of love, carrying in one hand a sugarcane stalk, the emblem of her husband. The sugarcane stalk with its prominent nodes and internodes is very clear even though due to damage, the leaves are absent. On the left side of the panel, a large number of spathes are present with clear spadices in the centre. Similar spadices are found in aroids and Cladiums and the depiction of just the spathes and spadices of any one of these groups of plants is not ruled out. I have identified them as spathes and spadices of *Rhodostachys pitcairniaefolia* only as a type.

## SACCHARUM OFFICINARUM Linn.

Sugarcane has tall stems called culms which are solid, erect and annual, of various colours and thickness ranging from pale or dark green to dark yellow, red, violet, maroon and sometimes stripped. Leaves are erect or drooping of light to dark green in colour, alternate with parallel venation and sometimes spreading at the top. The stem has prominent nodes and internodes with prop roots at the lower nodes.

Even though sugarcane grows in a large number of states of India, it is mainly depicted on temples of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka but only on *shaiva* temples. Rarely Kamadeva with his sugarcane bow is also sculpted on *vaishnava* temples such as Lakshmi-Narasimha temple, Nuggehalli, Karnataka.

In plate 184 Kamadeva carrying his bow made of sugarcane with five arrows in his quiver is riding his mount, the parrot. Plate 185 shows Manmatha, another name of Kamadeva, heavily jewelled, carrying the sugarcane bow. Since Kamadeva by striking his arrows made Shiva fall in love with Parvati, her links with Kamadeva are apparent. In some of her forms like Kamakshi at Kanchipuram (pl.186), Sivakamiyamma at Tirukkuvam, Mariamma near Madura and at other places she, like Kamadeva, carries the sugarcane in her hand. Kamadeva at the instigation of the gods, shot an arrow from his sugarcane bow at Shiva who as a result fell in love with Parvati and subsequently married her, and their son Subrahmanya, also called Skanda, Karttikeya or Kumara was born. Since Kamadeva was responsible for the marriage of his parents, Subrahmanya also holds Kamadeva's emblem, the sugarcane bow as seen in the Nataraja temple, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu.

Plate 187 shows Kamadeva shooting an arrow at Shiva. Kamadeva is seen lying dead on the left side of the panel, killed by Shiva with the fire emanating from his third eye. Parvati is seen on the left propitiating Shiva. Behind her are her two sisters, also propitiating Shiva to win him as a husband. There was a powerful *asura*



*Saccharum officinarum* Linn.

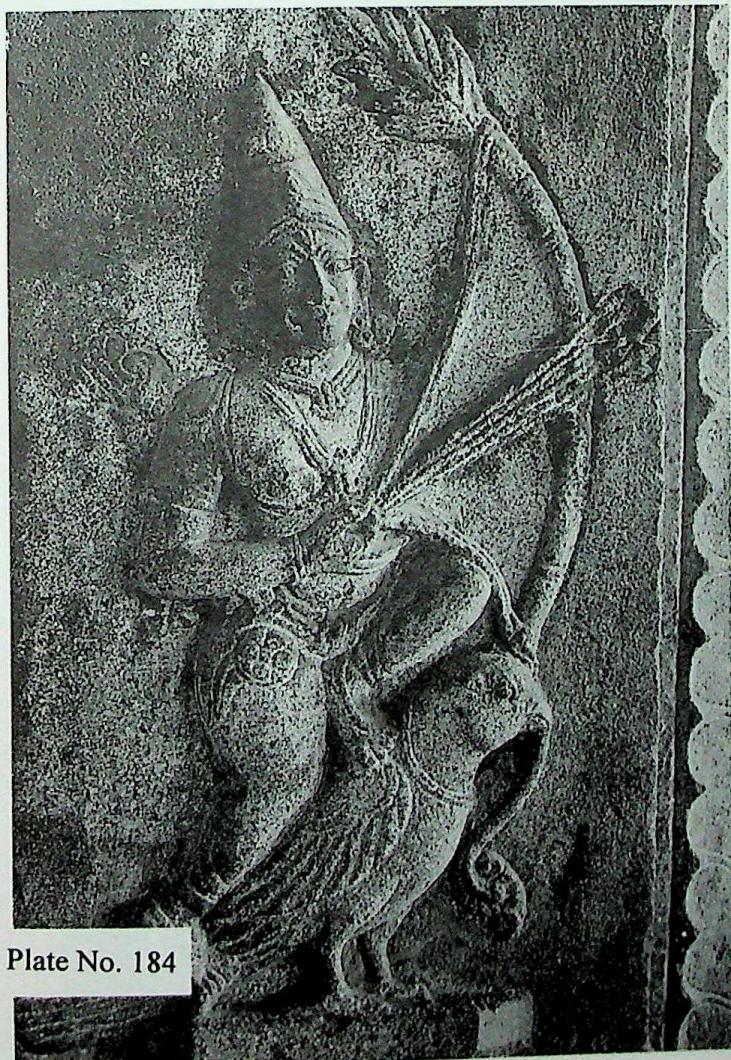


Plate No. 184



Plate No. 185



Plate No. 186

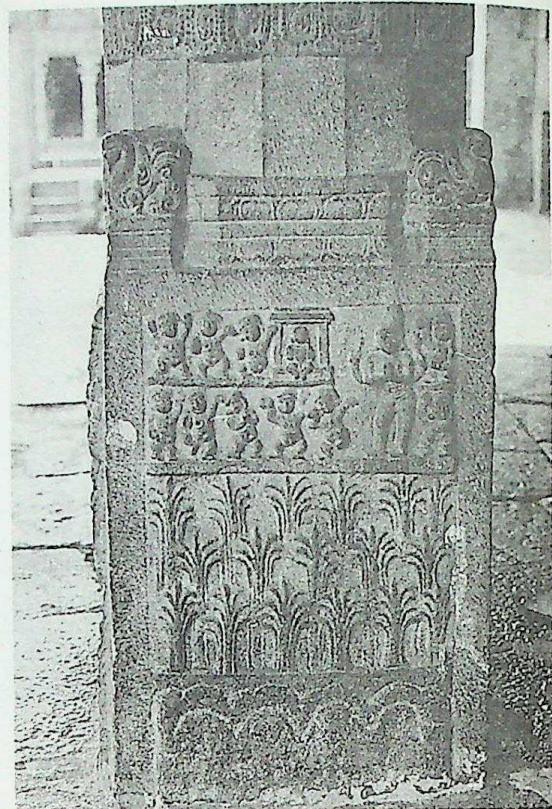


Plate No. 188

Plate No. 187



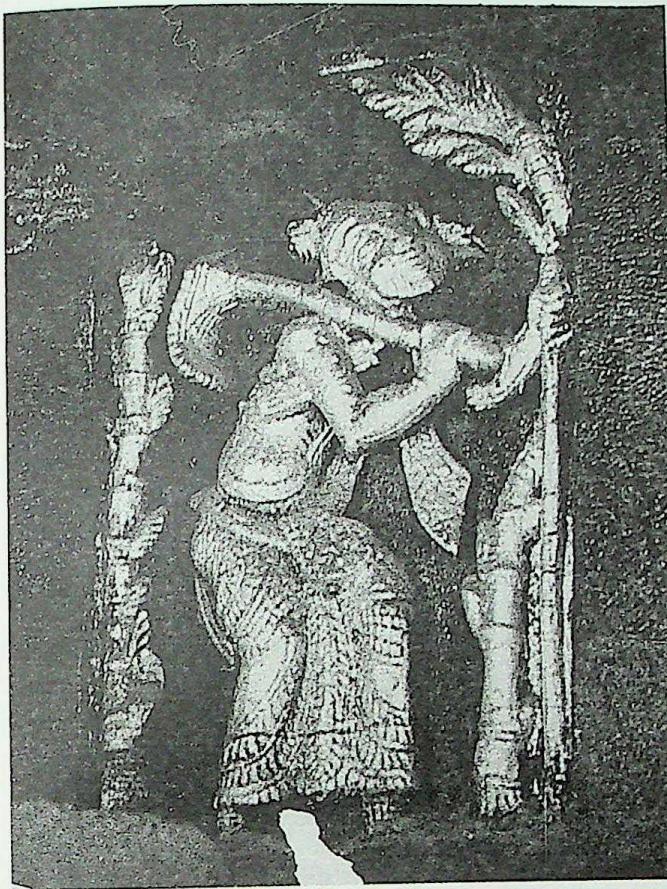
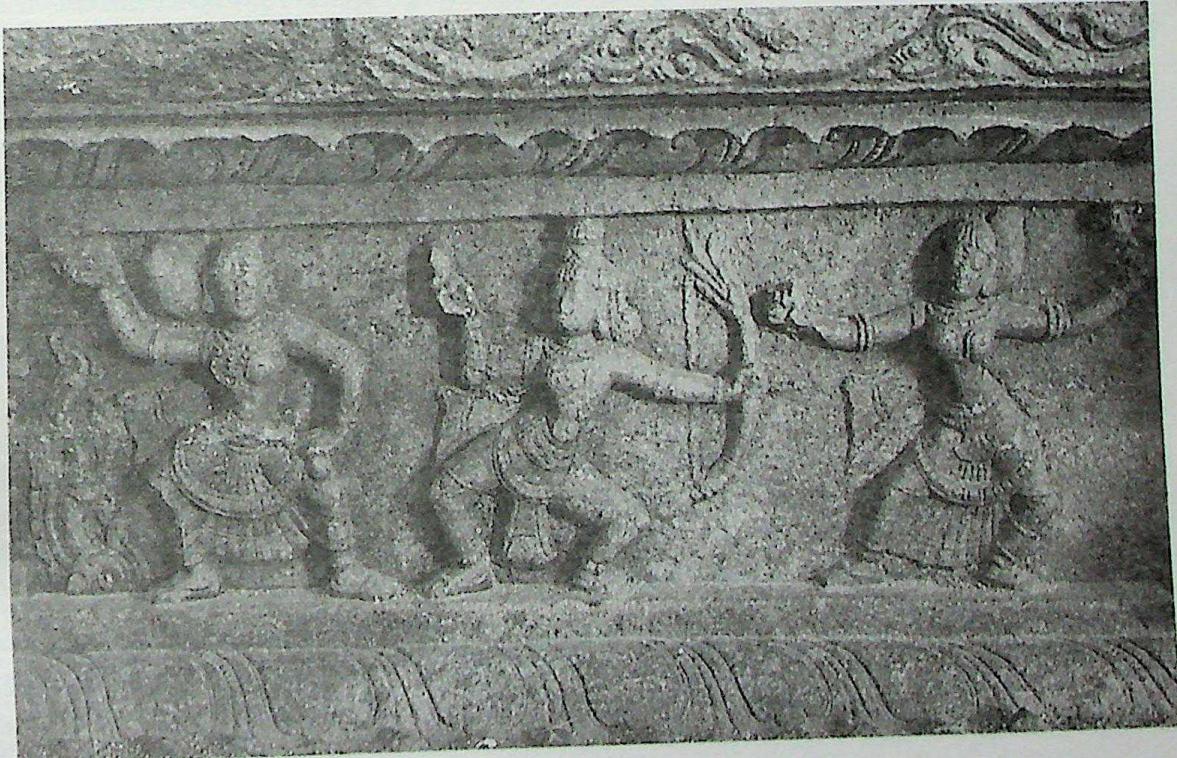


Plate No. 189

Plate No. 190



called Taraka who had a boon that only a son of Shiva could kill him. Knowing that Shiva was an arch-yogi for ever in meditation and not married, there was not much chance that he would beget a child. With this confidence of being near immortal, Taraka started committing atrocities on men and celestials and had to be annihilated. The celestials decided that the answer lay in Shiva getting married. It was also decided that Vishnu's sister or Yoga-maya would be the right wife for him and would be born to the Himalaya Parvata and Mena. Being the daughter of the Himalaya (*Parvata*), she was named Parvati. From her very childhood she decided to have Shiva for a husband and started propitiating him. It was all predestined and Kamadeva waited for an opportune moment to strike his arrows of love at Shiva. Seeing Parvati, Shiva fell in love with her.

At Airavateshvara temple, Darasuram in Tamil Nadu, a sugarcane plantation is sculpted as a pillar decoration (pl.188) and at the Nellairappar temple, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, is a sculpture of an old man with an axe in one hand and holding a sugarcane plant with the other (pl.189). An unusual representation is at Vellore temple in Tamil Nadu (pl.190) where Kamadeva is seen with his sugarcane bow dancing with two women on either side of him.

## SARACA ASOCA (Roxb.) De Wilde

*Ashoka* a small evergreen tree which grows all over India is distributed in south-east Asia from India to south-west China through Malaysia and eastwards to Celebes. Its leaves are pari-pinnate with 6-12 oblong or lanceolate leaflets. Flowers are orange or orange-yellow which turn vermillion red, are very fragrant and grow in dense axillary corymbs.

The tree is sacred to Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. Being a handsome tree with beautiful flowers, it has been a favourite tree for sculpture on temples of Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. It has been sculpted in stone, carved in wood and made in terracotta but not always realistically except in and around Mathura c. 1st-2nd century A.D.

*Ashoka* leaves and flowers are sculpted as decorative motifs on door jambs (pl.191), and as a decoration on Buddha's begging bowl (pl.28). The tree is sculpted both in a realistic as well as in a stylistic manner. One of the most realistic depictions of the tree, complete with leaves and flowers is as the mythical tree, *Kalpavriksha*, one of the five wish-fulfilling trees (pl.192).<sup>180</sup> Mythically this tree has the charms in preserving chastity. In the *Ramayana*, Ravana the King of Lanka abducted Sita, wife of Ramachandra. She took refuge in a grove of *Ashoka* trees and thus preserved her chastity.<sup>181</sup> In plate 193, Sita is sitting under a tree of *Ashoka* but the tree is highly stylised. Sita has a mournful expression and the *Ashoka* tree has been depicted with drooping branches and leaves as if sharing her sorrow.

*Ashoka* tree was a favourite floral motif during and after the Kushan period when mainly *Vrikshakas* standing under the *Ashoka* tree were sculpted (pls.194,195,196,197,198). They are also depicted on temples of Orissa. Often the *vrikshaka* is shown with her feet either encircling the tree trunk or kicking it, because of the old belief that the tree starts flowering only after a beautiful damsel kicks it. This is an extension of the *dohada* i.e., the pregnancy longing where the tree wishing to create or reproduce has the *dohada* feelings which have to be satisfied like those of a woman, which in this case is the tree being kicked by the left foot of a maiden, particularly if she is under the influence of intoxication. This concept preserves the old connection between trees, tree spirits and human life.<sup>182</sup> This belief and the custom of *dohada* was prevalent among the women in ancient India and was adapted in art motif commencing with the Sunga period showing a woman standing cross-legged under the *Ashoka* tree with her left foot against the trunk of the tree and her right hand holding a branch of the flowering tree. She is depicted nude or semi-nude, wearing heavy jewellery particularly a jewelled waist girdle called *mekhala*. She stands mostly in the *tribhanga* or the three-fold stance of her body.

A large number of panels showing *yakshis*, *vrikshakas* and *salabhanjikas* were excavated from the Sanghol stupa in Punjab showing nude women heavily jewelled, standing cross-legged under a variety of

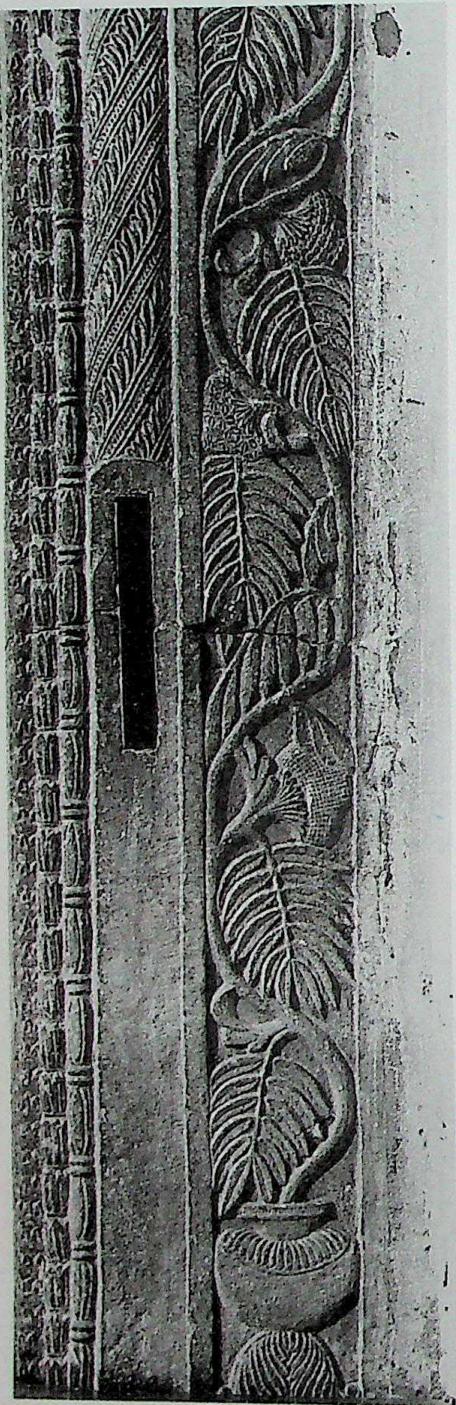


Plate No. 191

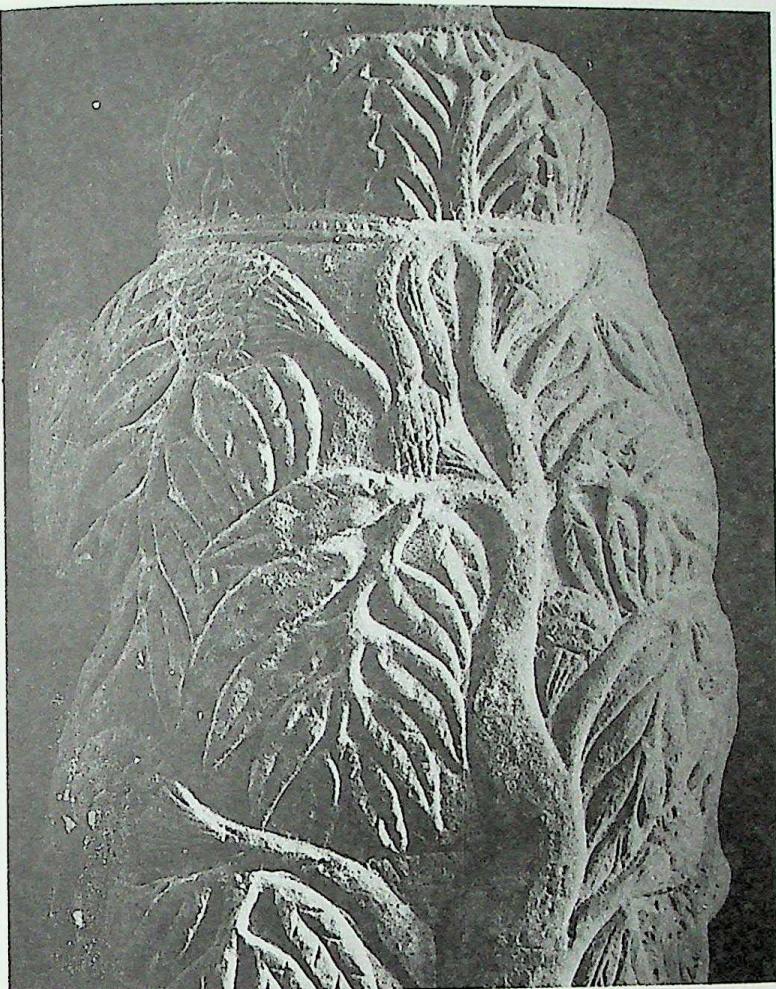


Plate No. 192



Plate No. 193

trees, *Kadamba*, *Ashoka*, *Ketaki* etc., all in the *tribhanga* stance, their right hand on their waist and the left holding a branch of the tree. From the quality of the stone used in sculptures, white-dotted pink stone, and the style of sculpturing, it appears that these panels were sculpted in or near Mathura and then transported to Sanghol.

Plate 197 shows a woman under the *Ashoka* tree with a bunch of flowers (or a flower) in her hands. C. Sivaramamurti has described her as a *salabhanjika* one who breaks the flowers of the *Sala* tree. But she is in fact a *vrikshaka* as the tree motif is the *Ashoka* and not the *Sala* tree.

A slight deviation of the *dohada* belief and its representation is seen from Bharhut where a *yakshini*, Chula-Koka-devata is seen standing on an elephant under the *Ashoka* tree and instead of kicking the tree trunk, holds a branch of the tree with her right arm, and her left arm and leg clasp the stem suggesting thereby the blossoming of the *Ashoka* tree not by a kick of her foot but by an embrace (pl.198). One of the five arrows of Kamadeva with which he strikes, is tipped with a flower of *ashoka*, the other arrows are tipped with flowers of *arabinda* (white lotus), *amra* (mango), *navamalika* (jasmine), and *nilotpala* (a blue water lily).<sup>183</sup>

According to a legend Parvati planted a sapling of *Ashoka* and the deities asked her the merit of doing so. To this she replied that constructing a *vapi* (stepped well) was equal in merit to digging ten wells, a pond to ten *vapis*, a son to ten ponds and planting a tree was equal in merit to having ten sons.<sup>184</sup> This perhaps was the ancient way of family planning. Plant trees instead of producing sons.



Plate No. 194



Plate No. 195



Plate No. 196



Plate No. 197

On festive occasions, mango or *Ashoka* leaves are festooned on doorways. This is particularly so in homes and temples of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

In some Jain temples the tutelary deity or a *mithuna* couple is sculpted under a tree which could be an *Ashoka* or a *Kadamba* tree. When the sculpture is corroded or badly sculpted, flowers or the globose composite fruits of the *Kadamba* could be mistaken for the closely knit corymbs of the *Ashoka*. Very likely the depiction of the floral motif is of the *Ashoka* because according to the Jain tradition, *Ashoka* tree is auspicious as the Jain Tirthankara Mahavira attained omniscience under the *Ashoka* tree and his initiation under this tree was attended by the celestials.

*Ashoka* tree is also associated with the birth legends of Siddhartha Gautama. Queen Mahamaya, the mother of Siddhartha when on her way to her father's house for the birth of her child, decided to stop at the Lumbini grove approximately 16 kms. to the east of Kapilavastu. The garden according to the legend was full of *Sala* trees in flower. Mahamaya stretched her right hand to hold on to a branch of a *Sala* tree and the birth pangs came upon her. Siddhartha was born from her right side and was at once received by the gods. The child took seven steps and announced that he was the foremost of the world and would reach the highest heaven. And added that it was his last birth and that after this life he would cross the ocean of existence. There are

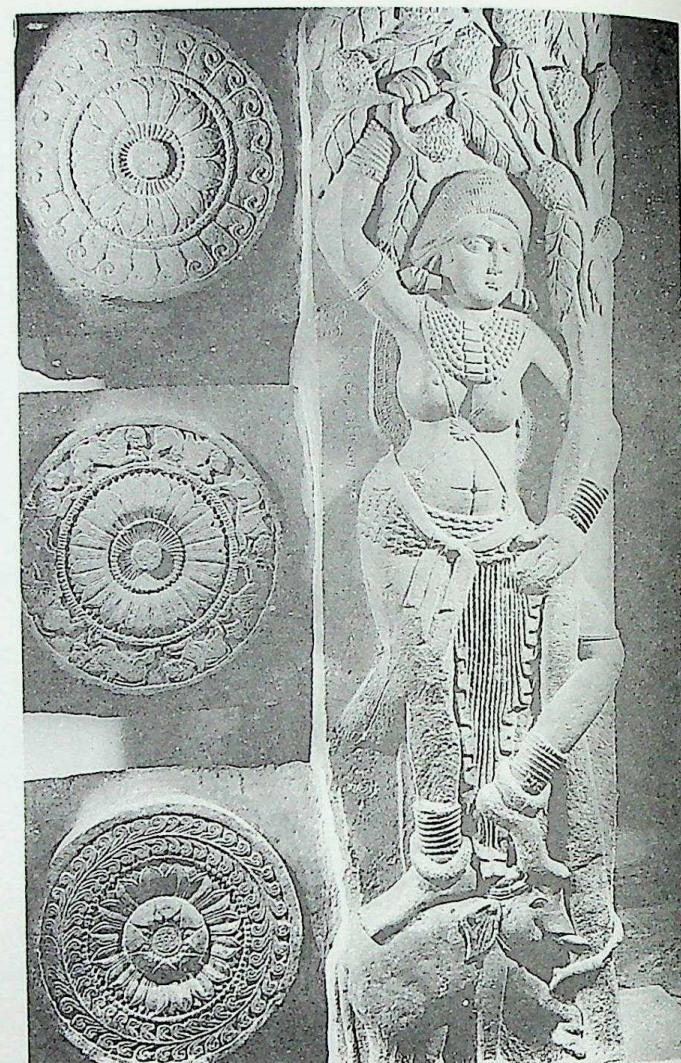


Plate No. 198

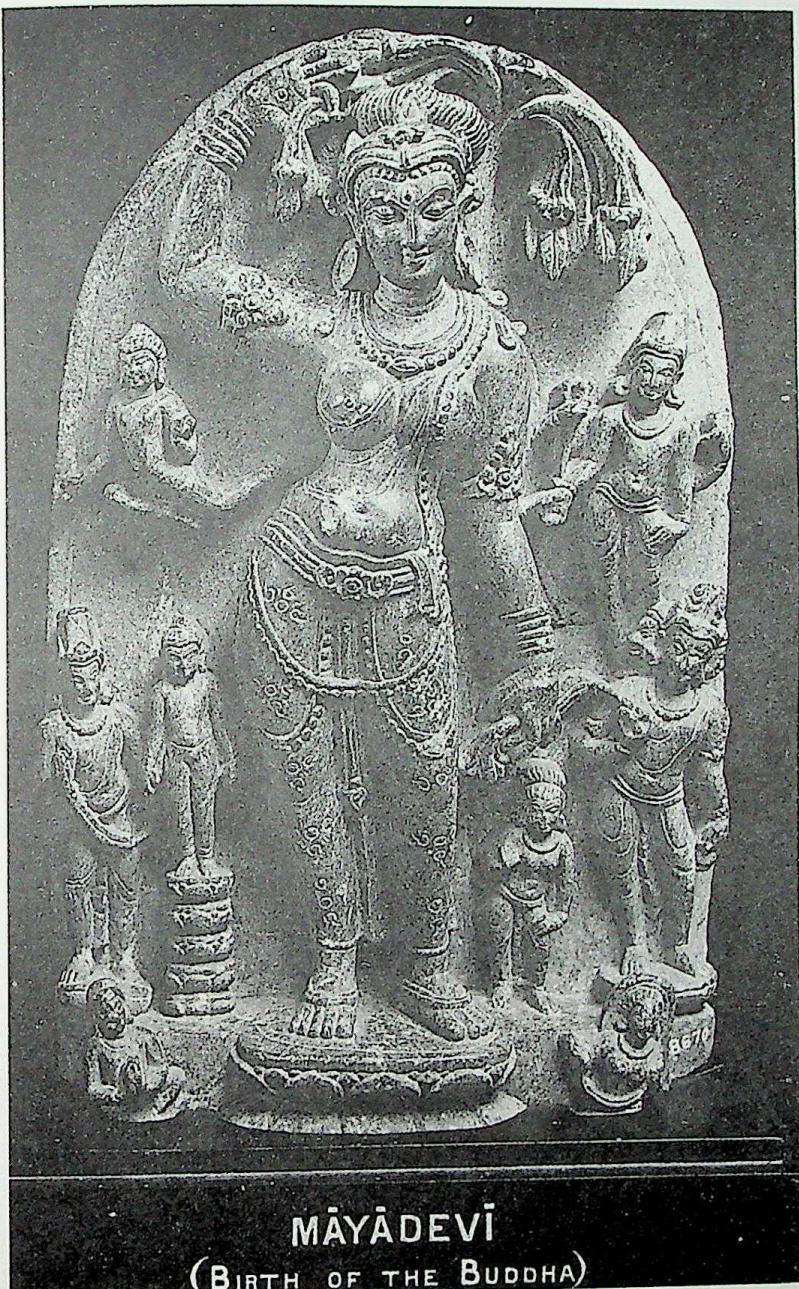


Plate No. 199

contradictory reports according to which he is mentioned as having been born under various trees, such as the *Sala*, *Ashoka*, *Palasa* or mango. Chinese traveller-scholar Hiuen T'siang who visited India in the 7th century A.D., mentions that Siddhartha was born under an *Ashoka* tree. "The miraculous birth of the Bodhisattva Siddhartha, as is known, took place in the Lumbini gardens near Kapilavastu on the road between the city and Devadaha. The branch of the tree which, 'bending down in response to her need',<sup>185</sup> served Mahamaya as support, is variously called *Sala* tree (*Nidanakatha*), mango (*Asokavadana*), *Plaksha* (*Lalita vistara*) and *Ashoka* tree (*Divyavadana*).<sup>186</sup>

*Sala* and *Plaksha* trees are common in the Nepal tarai, an area associated with the birth place of Siddhartha. Though the tree associated with the nativity of Buddha is popularly known as the *Sala* tree, the depiction of the birth of Buddha shows only the *Ashoka* tree irrespective of the location of the sculpture which could be from Nalanda (pl.199), Nagarjunakonda (pl.200), Amaravati or elsewhere (except for Gandhara sculptures which have 5-large petalled flowers). This shows the strong belief in the birth of Siddhartha under an *Ashoka* tree. According to a belief, when Siddhartha was born, the *Sala* tree shed its flowers on the new born child. The flowers of *Sala* are small, light yellow and insignificant to look at compared to the flowers of the *Ashoka* tree which are vermillion red, in big bunches and are fragrant. In flower symbolism also, the tree to shed its flowers have to be beautiful, fragrant flowers. Both the *Sala* and the *Ashoka* tree flower during the spring season and grow in the sub-Himalayan region.

To celebrate the event of Buddha's birth and to worship the tree under which he was born, was natural. In course of time, the anniversary of his birth evolved into a special festival when young maidens would gather in a grove of *Sala* trees, sing, dance and gather the flowers of the *Sala* tree and playfully throw them at each

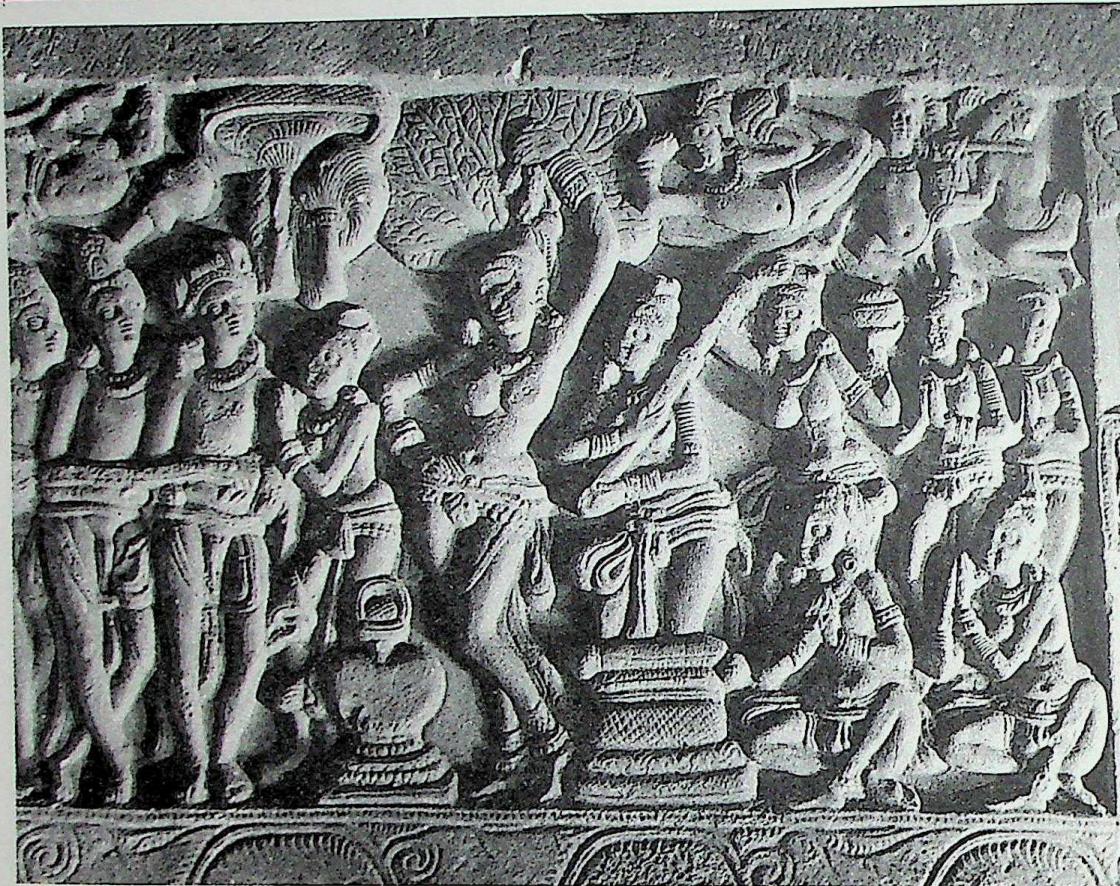


Plate No. 200



Plate No. 201



Plate No. 202

other thus getting the epithet *Salabhanjika*, the one who plucks the flowers of the *Sala* tree. In the post-nativity period, gradually the festival lapsed into obscurity. In art, instead of the nativity scene, the woman or *yakshi* was represented by a charming lady standing cross-legged under a tree, bending its branch with one hand and the other placed on her hip, very much the same pose as Mahamaya's during the nativity of Buddha. During the Kushan period, the woman and the tree-motif became very popular and the best examples are from Mathura and its surroundings. *Salabhanjika* gave place to *vrikshaka*, a tree nymph standing under various trees mostly in the *tribhanga* stance. She is always shown with full, heavy breasts looking voluptuous, nude or semi-nude, profusely ornamented and wearing a highly ornamental waist-girdle called *Mekhala*. These women possessed of voluptuousness and exciting beauty, called *Kama-Mohini* were the *yakshis* or *vanadevis* often worshipped in ancient India for begetting children.<sup>187</sup>

*Ashoka* tree is frequently mentioned in the Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.<sup>188</sup> Scenes from the *Ramayana* are often depicted on temples which include forest trees as well as episodes from the epics as seen in the temples of Deogarh and Nachna.

*Ashoka* is worshipped as a *Bodhi* tree of Sage Vipasyi as he got enlightenment under it (pl.201). Cunningham identified it as the *Patali* tree but it is in fact the *Ashoka* tree.

Apart from the leaves and flowers of the *Ashoka* tree, even fruits of the tree are also sculpted. The pods are large, 10-25 cms. x 3.5-5 cms flat, leathery, ellipsoidal-oblong in shape. They grow in clusters and are green when young and become copper coloured on drying. The fruit is slightly intoxicant and is chewed as a substitute for areca nuts.<sup>189</sup>

A bunch of *Ashoka* fruit pods is seen depicted on two *matrika* figures from Samalaji, Gujarat (pl.202). The *matrika* carries a bunch of pods as a decoration on her

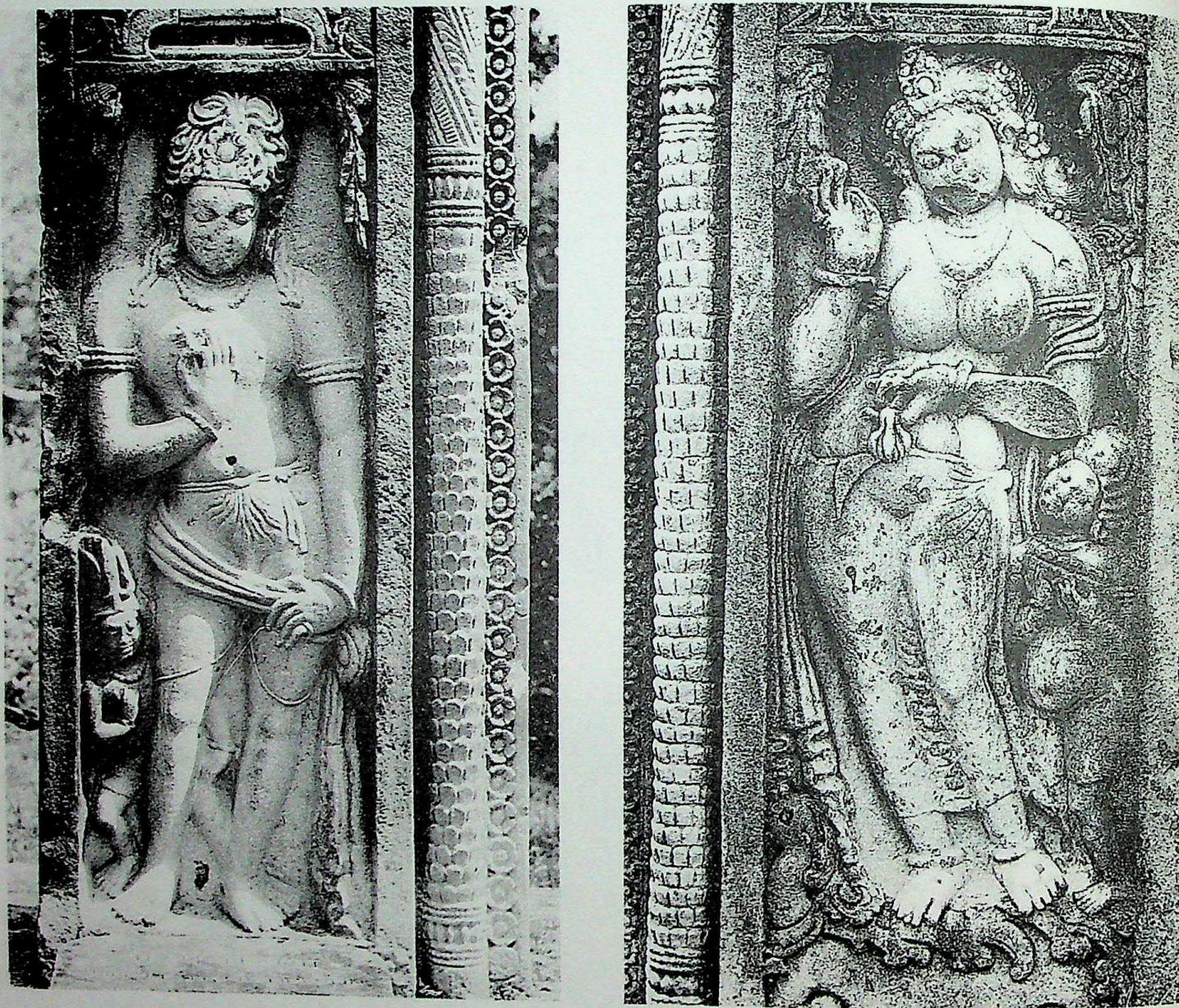


Plate No. 203

head gear. *Ashoka* flowers are also depicted on her head-gear at the back but not visible in the photograph. The two panels from Mandasaur in Madhya Pradesh with a Shiva standing in one panel and a woman in the other, both hold a flower of *Nymphaea* (water-lily) in one hand (pl.203). A bunch of *Ashoka* pods hang from the lintel of both the panels, along with a bunch of *Ashoka* flowers. In all the three panels a child is also present.

Shiva in the *Tri-murti* sculpture at Elephanta caves, Maharashtra also wears a bunch of *Ashoka* pods in the same manner, hanging from the head-gear. The *matrika* figure from Samalaji, Shiva in the Mandasaur panel and Shiva in the Elephanta cave *Tri-murti* figure all have the same serene look in their eyes reminiscent of the fact that the *Ashoka* pods are slightly intoxicant.



Plate No. 204

## SHOREA ROBUSTA Gaertn.f.

*Sala*, a medium to large-sized tree with pale yellow flowers in panicles, grows wild in the sub-Himalayan region, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and is also cultivated for its timber. The tree is associated both with the birth and death of Gautama Buddha and held sacred by the Buddhists.<sup>190</sup> Whereas there are contradictory reports regarding the tree under which Siddhartha was born, his death at Kushinara under a *Sala* tree has been established. Plate 204 shows his coffin lying between two stylised trees of the *Sala* and being guarded by the Malla tribe. The *Parinirvana* scene of the Buddha (pl.205), also depicts the *Sala* tree and a *yakshi* or a guardian spirit is seen among the branches of the tree. In both the panels, Ananda, the chief mourner is standing.

Plate 206 is a panel from Bharhut where the *Sala* tree full of leaves and flowers is being worshipped as a *Bodhi* tree since Siddhartha Gautama is believed to have been born and attained *nirvana* under the *Sala* tree. Under this flowering tree of *Sala*, is present a platform and below that a *Dharma Chakra* representing Buddha is sculpted. Two men are kneeling at the base of the tree with their foreheads touching the platform in a worshipful manner. A woman is standing on the left of the tree holding a floral garland and a man on the right side of the tree, holds a bowl containing flowers in his left hand. With his right hand he is throwing flowers as an offering on the platform under the tree.



Plate No. 205

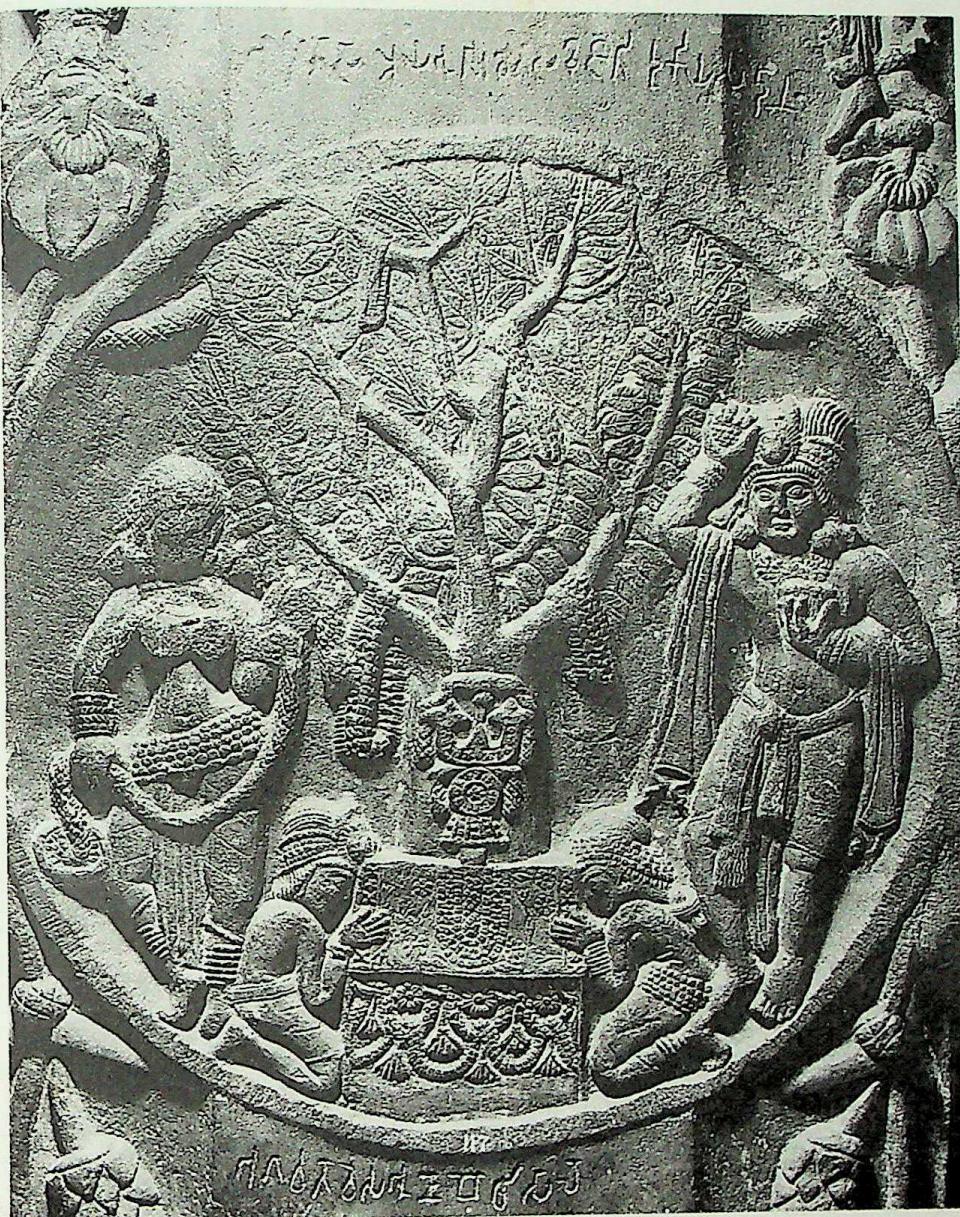
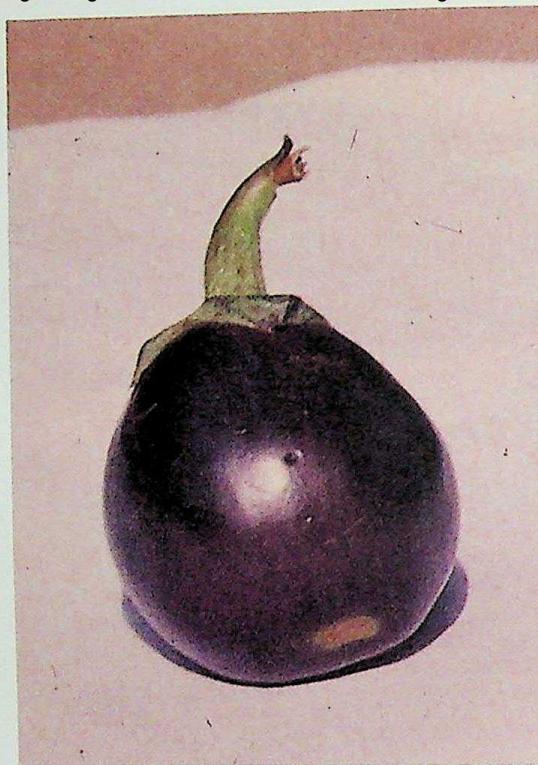


Plate No. 206

Plate No. 207



Plate 207 shows a *Salabhanjika* standing under the *Sala* tree above which is a dome-shaped canopy with the carving of a human figure on its underside. The *Salabhanjika* is holding the tree branch with one hand and the other hand is broken. Like the women in the tree motif panels, she is also heavily ornamented and her left leg is around the tree trunk. But unlike them, she is fully clothed. This is understandable as this sculptural piece is dated circa 8th century A.D. when women were shown wearing clothes as compared to women depicted earlier between circa 1st century B.C. to 2nd century A.D.



Solanum melongena Linn.

### SOLANUM MELONGENA Linn.

An annual, cultivated herbaceous plant, 3-4 feet in height, Brinjal has ovate leaves with purple coloured flowers. Depending on the variety, the fruits are round, ovate or elongate, deep purple, pale purple or white in colour. The genus *Solanum* is a native of Central and South America but the brinjal is a native of South Asia.

From records it appears that the plant is a native of India and has been cultivated in this country since a very long time. Later its cultivation spread through Iran to Egypt and other north African countries, Turkey and the Balkans. In China its cultivation is known for the last 1,500 years.

Heiser writes about the brinjal, "Some persons, in fact, have held that the egg plant originated in northern Africa but most informed people have favoured India. It has been pointed out that the egg plant is extremely variable in South-East Asia; some botanists have considered that the centre of a plant's diversity is also its centre of origin, which may or may not be true. As a cultivated plant, it is extremely important in India, and some of the earliest written records of it come from there."<sup>191</sup>

According to Heiser there is some disagreement over the etymology of the species named *Solanum melongena*, which Linnaeus applied to the egg plant. Some people feel that it was derived from an Arabian name of the plant, but most think that it comes from the Italian *malazana*, which translates as "mad people". The latter interpretation would not be inappropriate, for at one time the eating of the fruit was thought to cause insanity. Thus we also have the pre-Linnaean name, 'Mala insana', which likewise means mad people. The egg plant was also formerly known as raging apple and love apple.<sup>192</sup>

There may be an association of the egg plant, particularly of the fruit, to madness. Brinjal motif is found in *shaiva* temples only and taking hallucigenic drugs is associated with *shaiva* practices. Brinjal fruit is one of the vegetables accepted as offerings at temples dedicated to Shiva as well as for rituals connected with ancestor worship. One of the vegetables cooked for offerings to the deity as *bhog* is the brinjal fruit.

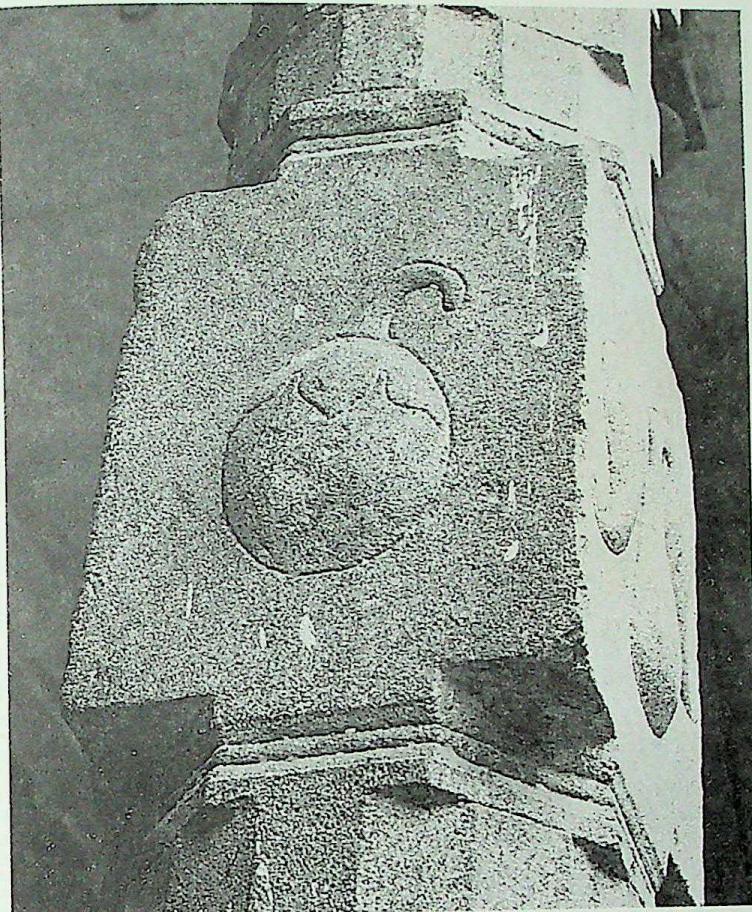


Plate No. 208

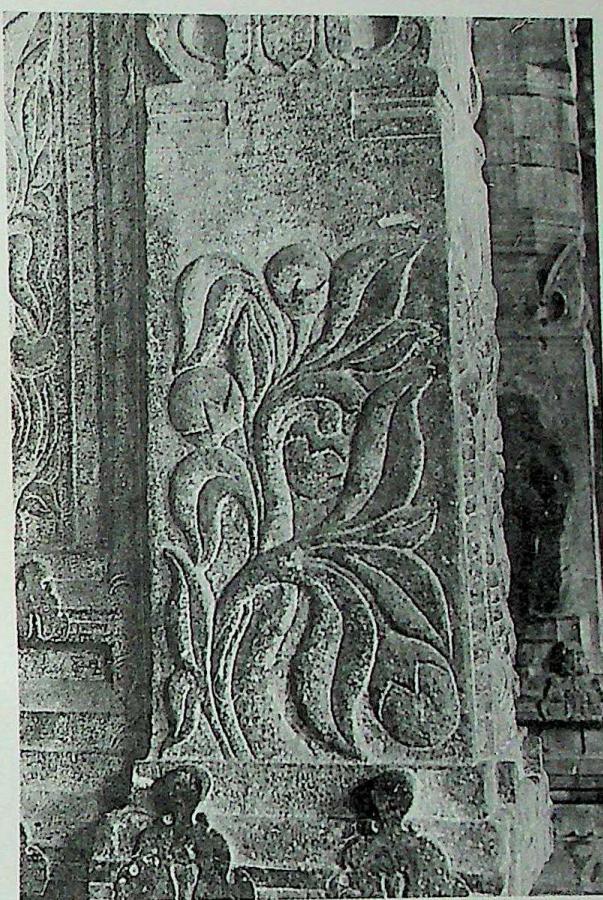


Plate No. 209

It is mentioned in the *Matsya Purana* that after the completion of the *vrata*, vow kept for Shiva, the Brahmanas should be fed rice cooked in milk and sugar and given a *dakshina* of a brinjal made in silver or gold, to a Brahman with a large family.<sup>193</sup>

Brinjal motif is present on the Nataraja temple, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu (pl.208), where only an isolated brinjal fruit is sculpted on a pillar as a decoration. At Jambukeshwara temple, Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, the entire brinjal plant with flowers, fruits and leaves are sculpted (pl.209). Chidambaram and Jambukeshwara are both *shaiva* temples.

D.R. Bhandarkar mentions that brinjal fruit is depicted on the Heliodorous column at Besnagar, "The top is decorated with an ornamental festoon, consisting of three strands suspended on eight brackets and in each of the eight swags is a fruit or flower. The latter are more or less weatherworn, and consequently it is not possible to identify most of them. Of the fruit, the custard apple, mango and brinjal can be easily recognised but of the flowers lotus alone can be identified."<sup>194</sup>

The motif identified by Bhandarkar as a brinjal is in fact a pear. Brinjal is either round, oblong-oval or elongated. The fruit depicted on the Heliodorous column is most definitely pear-shaped. Also, the leaf attached to the fruit is serrated and elliptical as the leaf of the pear is, and not ovate as in the brinjal. Depiction of the Pear is understandable as Heliodorus was Greek by birth and his countrymen would have been familiar with the pear while brinjal is not known to have been indigenous to Greece. Even the ornamental festoon consisting of strands suspended on brackets and swags is typically Greek.

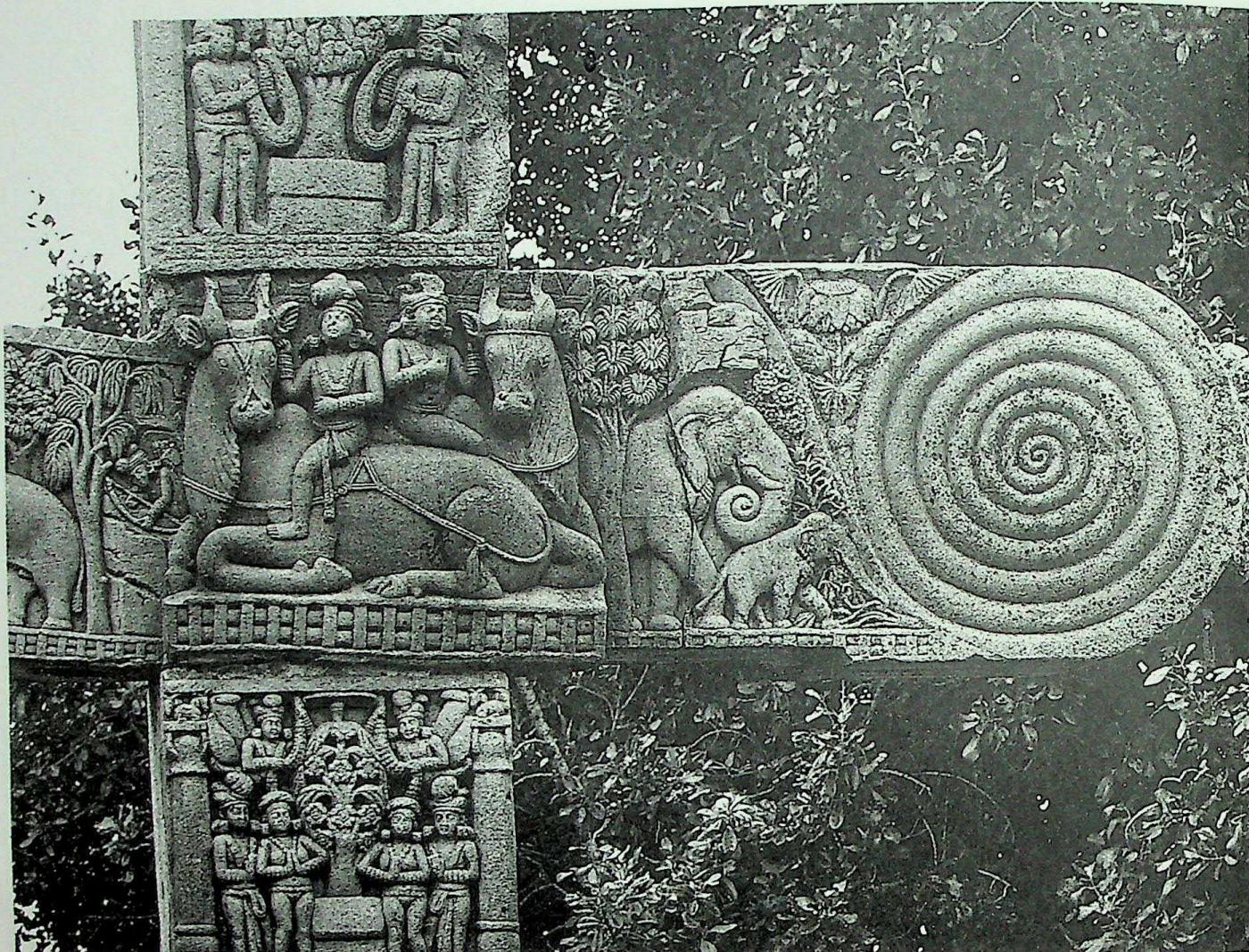


Plate No. 210

### SPATHODEA CAMPANULATA Beauv.

The African Tulip tree is a large-sized tree, topped by large, dark-green pinnate leaves arranged in opposite pairs. The tree bears from September to December dense terminal racemes of orange-red flowers, edged with yellow. The flowers, broadly trumpet-shaped are large, 7-13 cms. across. The brown buds curve to a point and are inflated with water. The sickle-shaped buds are enclosed in a stout leathery calyx. The fruit, a capsule is pointed at both ends and when fully ripe appears like fingers pointing upwards and outwards, above the foliage.

A native of Africa, the tree has done well on Indian soil and flourishes well in Karnataka, the only place in India where the tree sets seeds.

The tree is sculpted very graphically on Sanchi *stupas* Madhya Pradesh, where it is shown as a part of the forest flora. The apical, finger-like, upwards pointing fruits are unmistakable (pl.210).



Syzygium cumini (L) Skeets.

### SYZYGIUM CUMINI (L) Skeets.

*Jamun, Jambu* or *Naval* a medium to large-sized tree with a smooth, grey bark occurs all over India. Leaves are long, flowers greenish-white and bears one-seeded oval-round, dark purple fruits. The tree flowers from April-June and fruits from June to July. It is the *Sthalavriksha* (pl.211) of the Jambukeshwara temple, the temple named after the *Jambu* tree. The author has come across the depiction of this tree only on temples of Tamil Nadu. Plate 212 shows a hunter offering a lotus flower to a *Siva-linga* installed under the *Jambu* tree, while plate 213 depicts the worship of the *Siva-linga* under the *Jambu* tree by a householder.

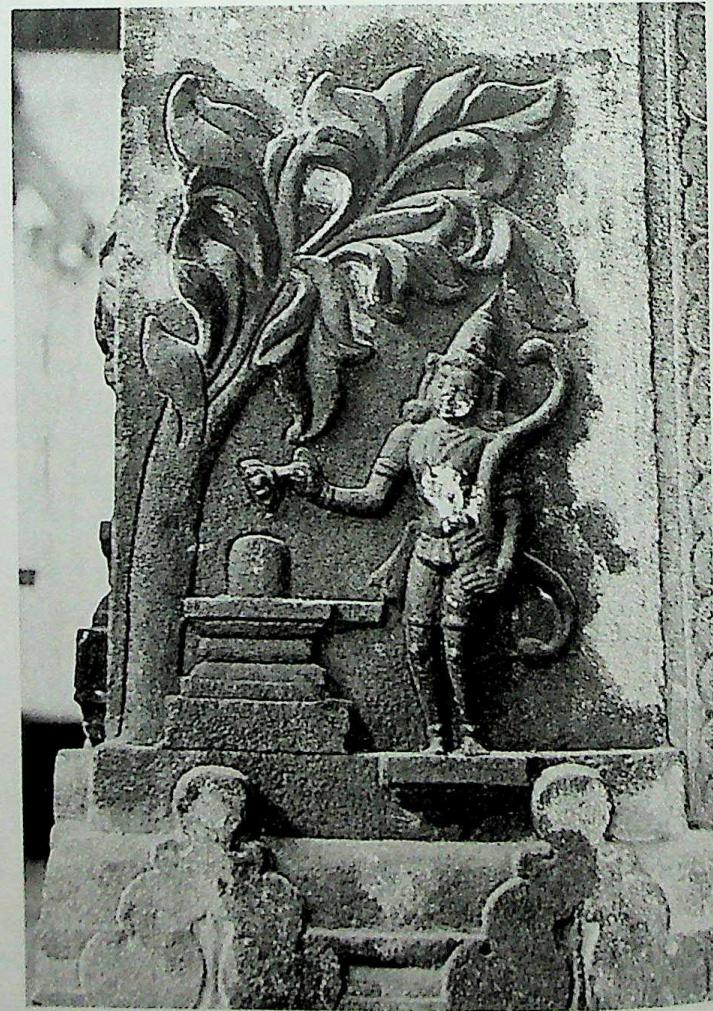
The Tamil name of the tree is *Naval* and many legends are connected with it. Being the *Sthalavriksha* of the temple, it is mostly sculpted on this temple. According to the legend, an ascetic was performing penance in a grove of *Naval* trees when a fruit fell in front of him which he presented to Shiva at Mt. Kailash. Shiva ate the fruit and spat out the seed which having been sanctified by Shiva, was swallowed by the ascetic. The seed inside the ascetic grew into a tree which split his head and gave shade to the world of gods. Shiva was requested by the ascetic to stay under the shade of the tree. He agreed but on condition that the ascetic should go to the place where he had found the fruit. The ascetic, with the tree sticking out of his head, walked to the place where he had initially found the fruit of *Naval*, and took up his residence there. Goddess Parvati created a *lingam* of water at that spot and the tree was so positioned that it gave shade to the *lingam*.<sup>195</sup>

Another legend associated with the tree and sculpted at the same temple is regarding an elephant and a spider worshipping the *lingam*. On Mt. Kailash lived two devotees of Shiva named Malyavan and Pushpadanta. They were always quarrelling, wanting to excel each other in their devotion to Shiva. Malyavan cursed Pushpadanta to



Plate No. 211

Plate No. 212



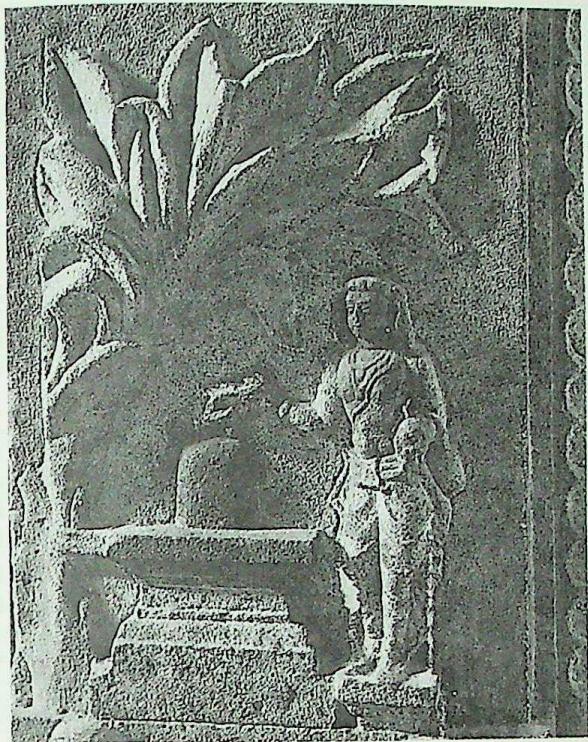


Plate No. 213

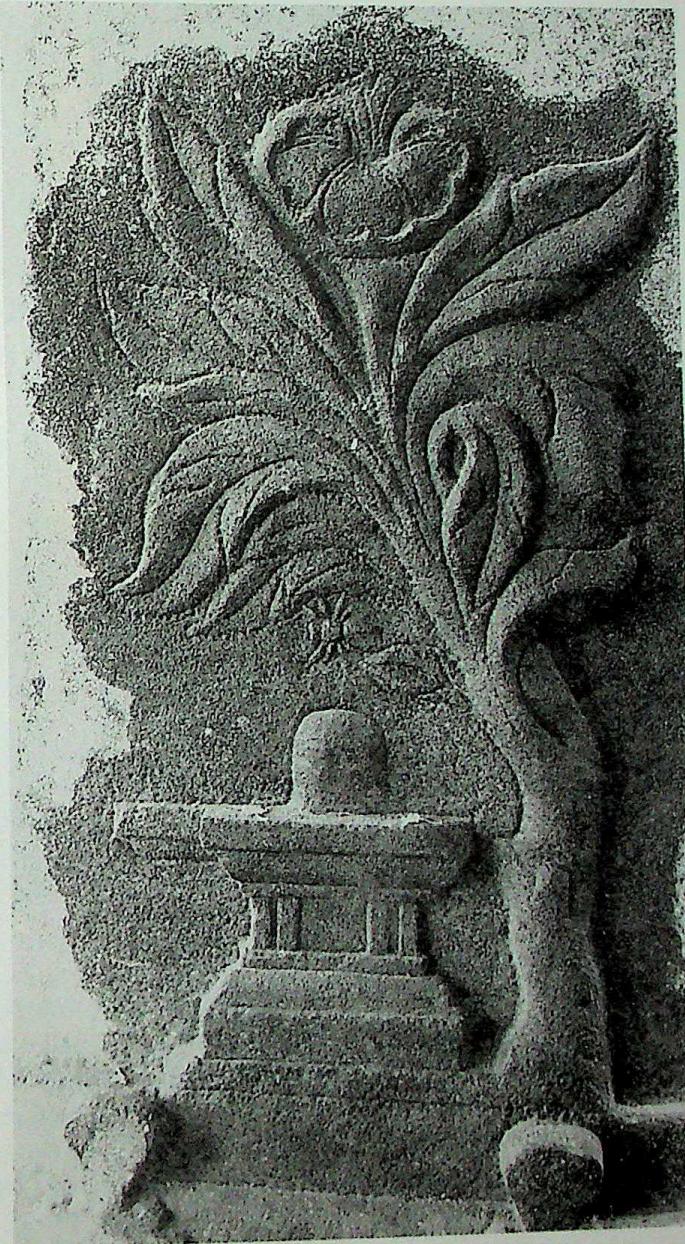


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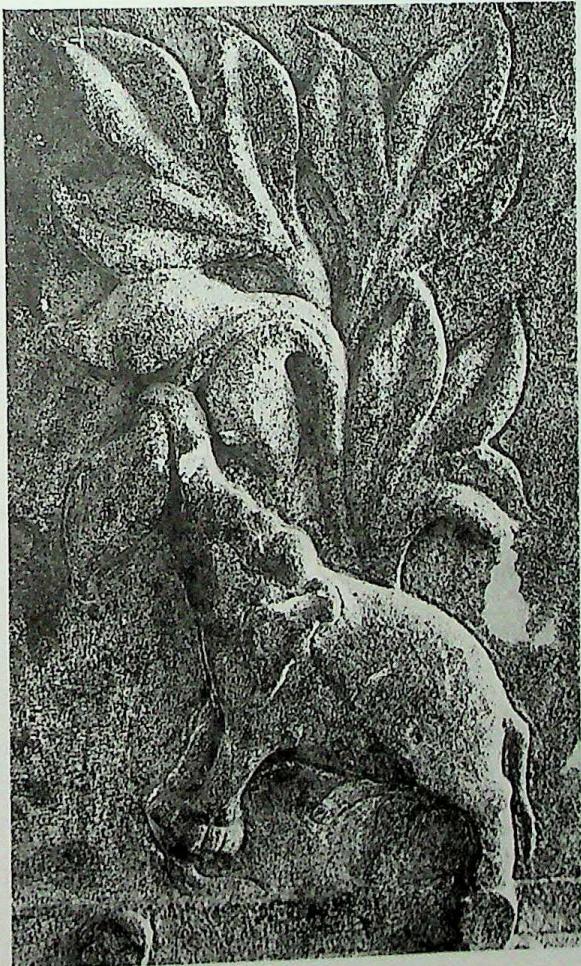


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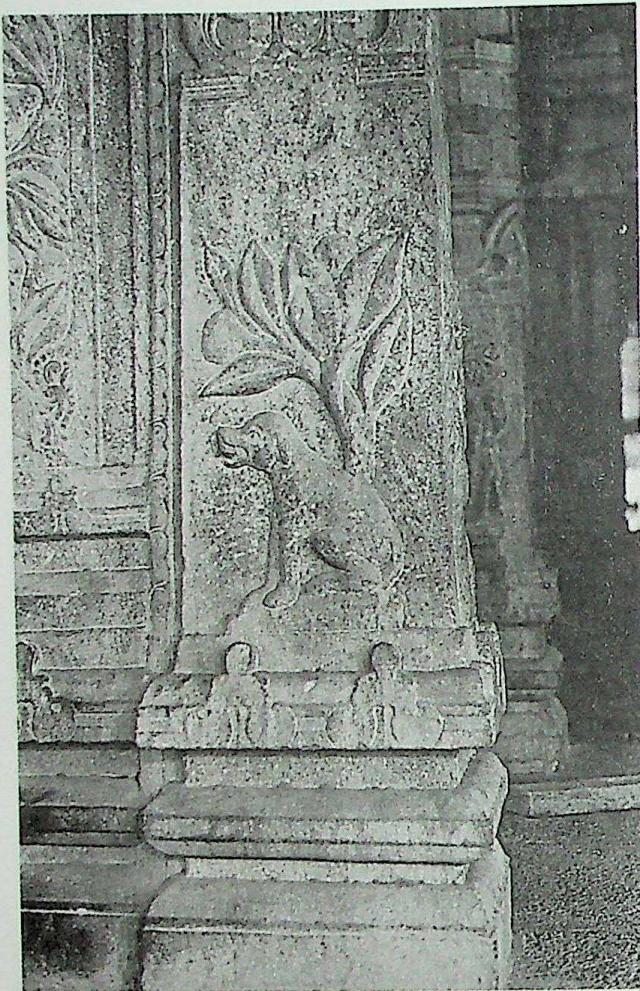


Plate No. 216

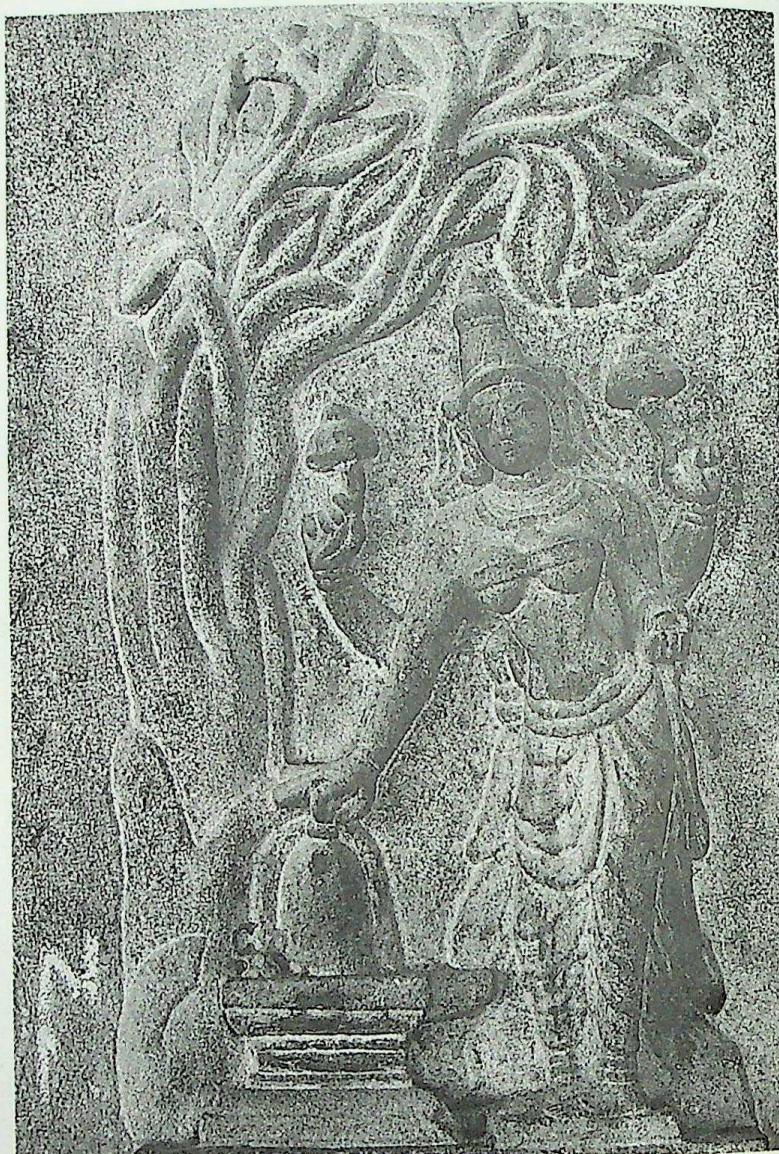


Plate No. 217

become an elephant and Pushpadanta cursed Malyavan to become a spider. Both of them then approached Shiva for a redress of their curse. Shiva advised them to go to Jambukeshwara temple and worship him there. Both did as advised. The elephant collected water from various holy places (*Teerthams*), for the *abhisheka* of the *lingam* (pl.214). He would keep the place clean and tidy and remove all the leaves that fell from the tree. The spider took up his residence on the *Naval* tree and formed a canopy over the *lingam* with his cobweb so that dry leaves did not fall on it (pl.215). The elephant did not like the cobweb and tore it down. The spider in retaliation crepted into the trunk of the elephant and bit him. In pain, the elephant dashed his trunk on the ground and died, thus killing the spider also. Shiva was moved by the devotion of the two and gave them *darshana*, and blessed them. Thus, the elephant and the spider got salvation. Since Lord Shiva was worshipped at this temple by an elephant, the place came to be called Tiruvannaikkval, the 'grove of the elephant'.<sup>196</sup>

Shiva in his form of Bhairava has an open-mouthed dog as his companion, and sometimes Shiva himself in his aspect of Bhairava is shown in the form of an open-mouthed dog.<sup>197</sup> In plate 216, Shiva Bhairava is seen sitting under the *Jambu* tree and has taken the place of the traditional *Siva-linga*.

In plate 217, four-handed Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu is offering *Bilvapatra*, the leaves of the *Bilva* tree with the lower right hand to the *Siva-linga* and holds lotus buds in two of her hands.

## TERMINALIA ARJUNA (Roxb.) Wight & Arn.

*Arjuna* is a medium to large-sized tree with a whitish or pinkish-grey bark. Leaves are compound with leaflets opposite or sub-opposite, oblong or elliptic with 1-2 glands at the base. It has pale yellow flowers in pendulous, terminal or axillary spikes. Fruits are ovoid or oblong and 4-5 winged. The tree flowers from April to July and fruits from July to August, while the seeds ripen from February to May.

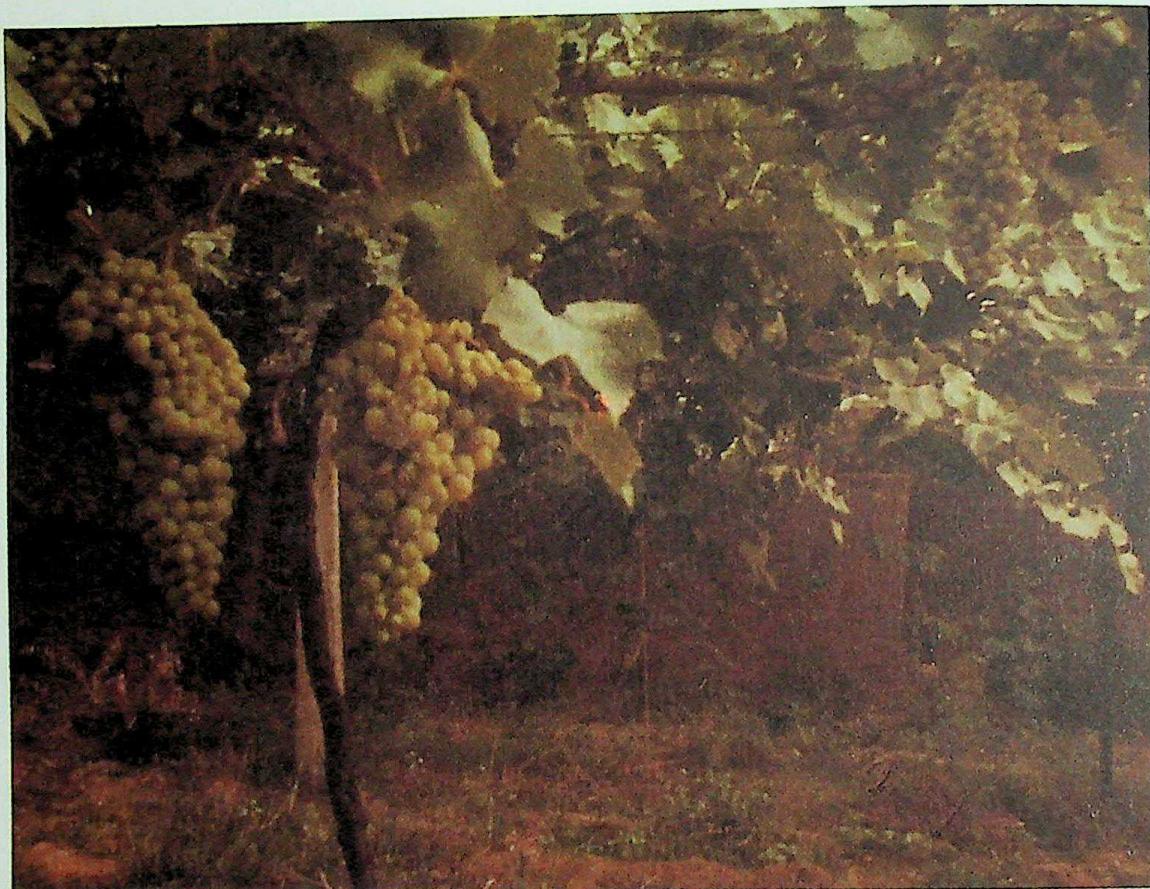
But for the legend surrounding the *Arjuna* tree, it would be impossible to identify the plant motif as the tree is totally stylised with no resemblance whatsoever to the real *Arjuna* tree or for that matter to any other tree. The sculpture of the tree is based purely on the imagination of the sculptor.

Nalakubera and Mangriva were the sons of Kubera. Once under the influence of intoxication they were sporting stark naked in a river with the *apsaras*. Sage Narada passed by but the two boys arrogant and full of their own importance, ignored him and did not pay their respects. Narada wanted to teach them a lesson and transformed them into the *Arjuna* trees but retained their memory. Nalakubera and Mangriva begged forgiveness but the curse once pronounced could not be revoked. On the pleadings of the boys, Narada modified the curse and said that after one hundred *Deva*-years, the touch of Krishna would liberate them from this curse. And so it happened. When Krishna was a small child, to keep him out of mischief, his foster mother Yasoda tied him to a mortar when she went about her household chores. Krishna's attention was drawn to the *Arjuna* trees growing in the compound of the house. Being God incarnate, he remembered the words of Narada and did not want him to be proved wrong. Dragging the mortar between the two trees, he pushed and uprooted the trees. As the trees fell down with a crash, two fiery spirits came out illuminating the space around with the light emitting from their bodies, and after offering their respects to Krishna, rose upwards.<sup>198</sup> (pl.218).

Though the legend of Krishna uprooting the *Arjuna* trees is sculpted on some temples, the trees depicted have no resemblance to the real *Arjuna* trees. The heads of Nala-Kubera and Mangriva are visible on top of the trees. Krishna in this legend is often sculpted as a young man and not as a child as mentioned in the texts. *Arjuna* trees appear to be cursed trees as people are cursed to become *Arjuna* trees as a punishment.<sup>199</sup>



Plate No. 218



Vitis nucifera. Linn.

### VITIS VINIFERA Linn.

The Grape-Vine is a large, deciduous, woody climber, climbing by means of leaf opposed bifid tendrils. Leaves are thin, sub-orbicular, 3-5 lobed. Fruit is a berry which grows in bunches, variable in size, ovoid to globose, greenish, purplish or blue-black, sweet-sour in taste, edible.

Grape Vine is depicted in Kushan sculptures either by itself or in combination with other plants. In plate 219 is a woman carrying a pot of wine in one hand and a bunch of grapes in the other. A couple is standing in the window above. The man has one arm around the woman and with his other hand he is trying to take the glass off the pot of wine.

Bharhut decorative panels of the grape vine and the lotus are very realistically done (pl.220). Combination of the lotus plant and the grape vine is a very common combination of floral motifs. Grape vine is sculpted on only early sculptures dated circa 1st to 3rd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. in the Kushan period, Mathura, Bharhut and Sanchi stupas. It is also sculpted on Mt. Abu temples of Rajasthan; at the temple of Andal at Srivilliputtur in Tamil Nadu where a bunch of grapes is present in the hands of Rati.

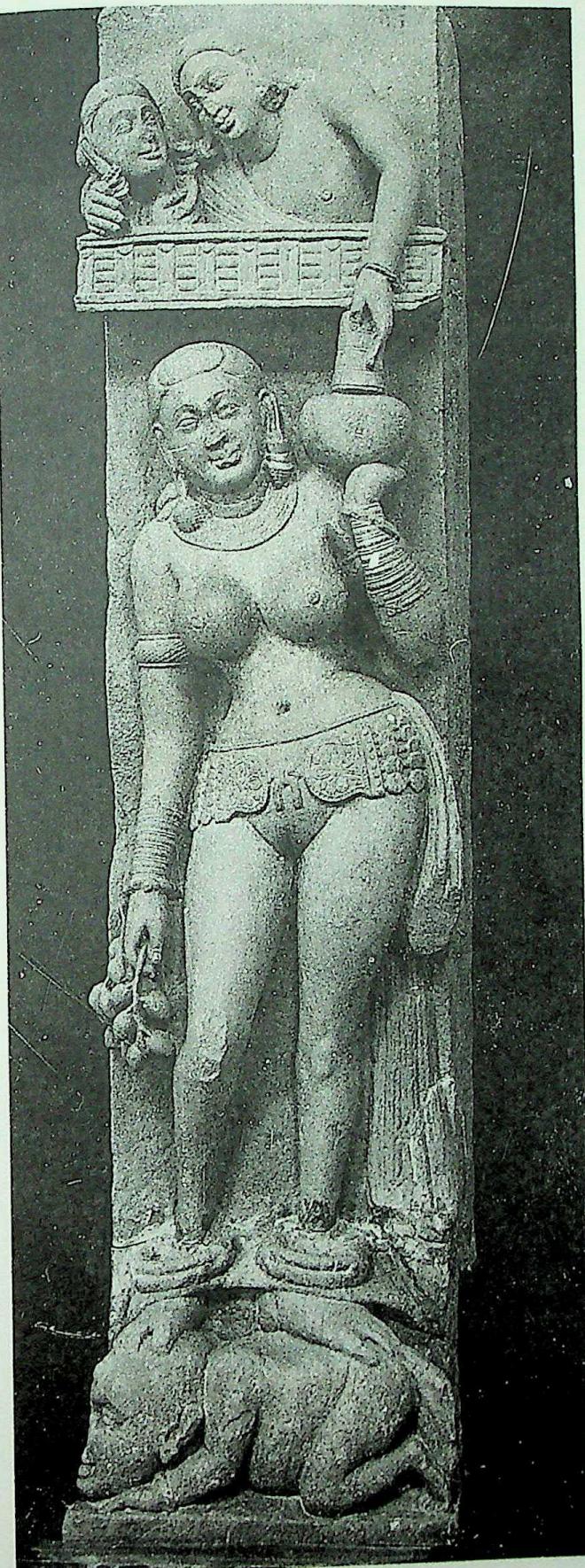


Plate No. 219

Plate 221 from Bharhut shows a standing figure of a foreigner, a king or a warrior, holding in his right hand a twig of the grape vine with a single leaf and a bunch of grapes. On his left shoulder is a strap holding the scabbard with a straight and broad sword in it. The handle of the sword is outside the scabbard. The strap is wound round the lower portion of the scabbard which has a design on it. The left hand of the man is holding the scabbard and the nail of his thumb is clearly visible.

Compared to the Indian swords which have a narrow, curved blade of the swords, the Greek and the scythian swords had a straight and a broad blade.

Grapes must have been cultivated in India from very early times as they are mentioned in *Matsya Purana* where it is written that grapes made of silver should be presented to a Brahman at the end of a *vrata* kept for Shiva.<sup>200</sup>



Plate No. 220



Plate No. 221

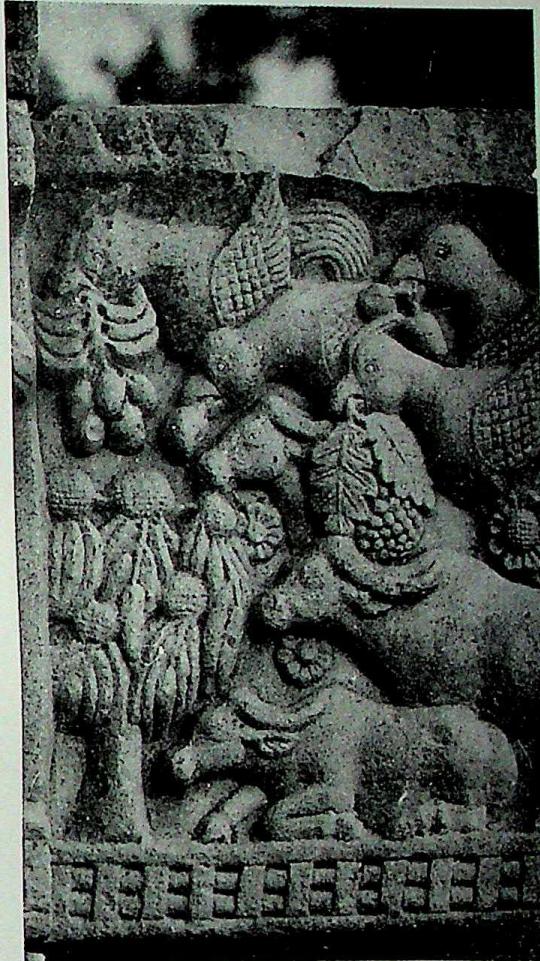


Plate No. 222

## ZEA MAYS Linn.

Maize is an erect, cereal plant with broad, flat unicostate leaves, monoecious bearing separate male and female flowers in the same plant. Male flowers are borne in terminal branched tassels whereas the female spike, the cob is axillary, enclosed in the sheath of a leaf and surrounded by bracts. The plant flowers and fruits during the summer and rainy season.

The origin of the plant is shrouded in mystery. Very probably its primary centre of origin is central America particularly southern Mexico. The discovery of fossil maize pollen and other archaeological evidence in Mexico dated 7,000 years ago point to this area as an early centre of maize cultivation. Asiatic origin of maize points to Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Chamba in Himachal Pradesh. This hypothesis is based on extensive studies done and recorded in various collections made from the north-eastern and north-western part of India.<sup>201</sup>

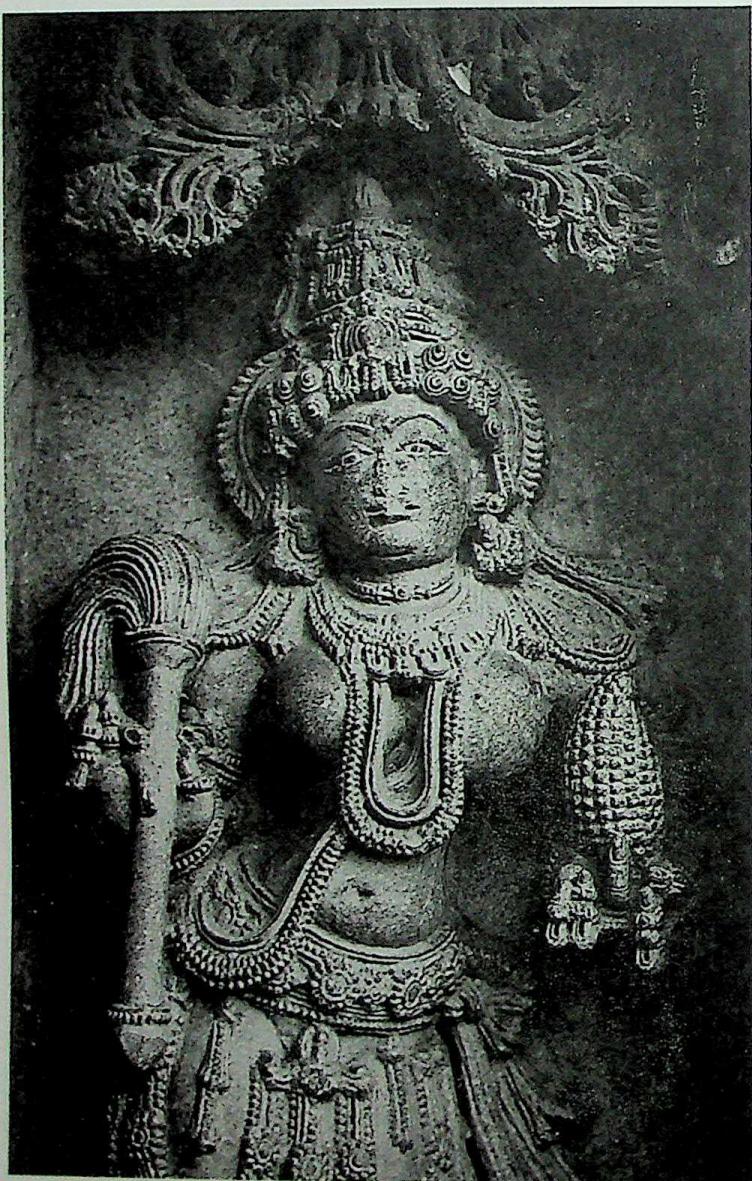


Plate No. 223

Different varieties of the corn cob are extensively sculpted but only on the Hindu and Jain temples of Karnataka. Various deities are shown as carrying a corn cob in their hands as on the Chenna Kesava temple, Belur. The straight rows of the corn grains can be easily identified. In the Lakshmi Narasimha temple, Nuggehalli, the eight-armed dancing Vishnu in his female form of Mohini is holding a corn cob in one of her left hands and the other hands hold the usual emblems of Vishnu. Two male figures at the base are playing the *mridanga*. In the Trikuta basti, Mukhamandapa, Sravangalgola, Karnataka, a 12th century A.D. sculpture of Ambika Kushmandini sitting on a lotus seat under a canopy of mangoes holds in her left hand a corn cob. Plate 223 depicting a Nayika holding a corn cob in her left hand is from Nuggehalli, Karnataka.

Temples where the sculptures of corn cobs are found are dated 12-13th century A.D. The common belief is that maize originated in Mexico and came to India by the 11th-12th century. By the time these temples were constructed, maize would have been fairly common in India.

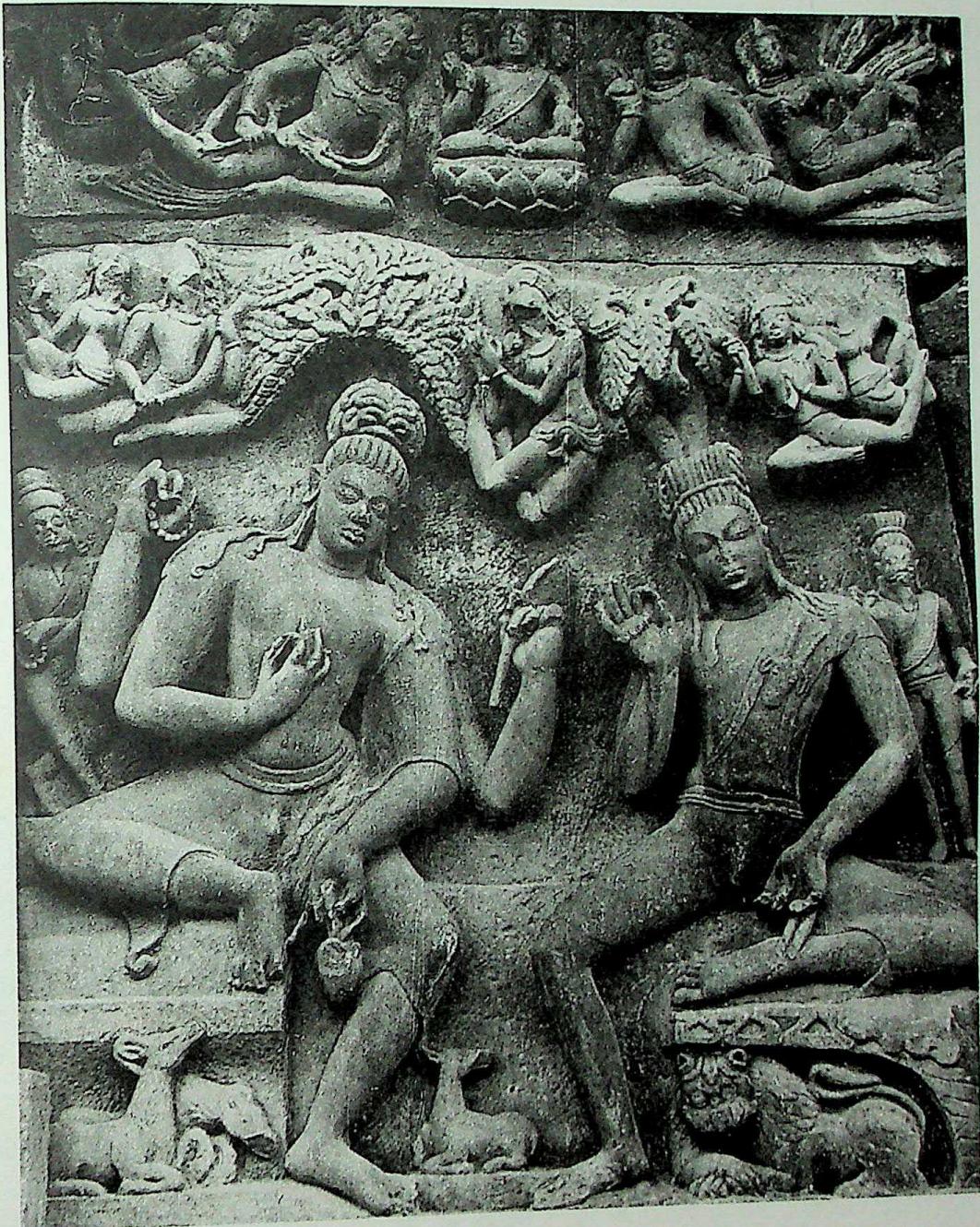


Plate No. 224

### ZIZYPHUS MAURITIANA Lam.

*Badari* is a spiny, moderate-sized tree of low shrubby form with a spreading crown. It has simple leaves of variable form, oblong, elliptic, ovate. Though the tree grows wild, it is also cultivated for its edible fruits which depending on the variety can be oblong, globose, red, orange or yellow coloured drupes. The tree flowers from April to October and fruits from October to March.

The fruit of *Badari* is held sacred for various religious ceremonies among the Hindus, particularly in folk cults, and in the worship of Shiva. At the end of the sacred ceremony held at the conclusion of a *vrata*, a vow kept for Shiva, a *Badari* fruit made in gold is offered as *dakshina* to a Brahmana.<sup>202</sup> It is auspicious to present

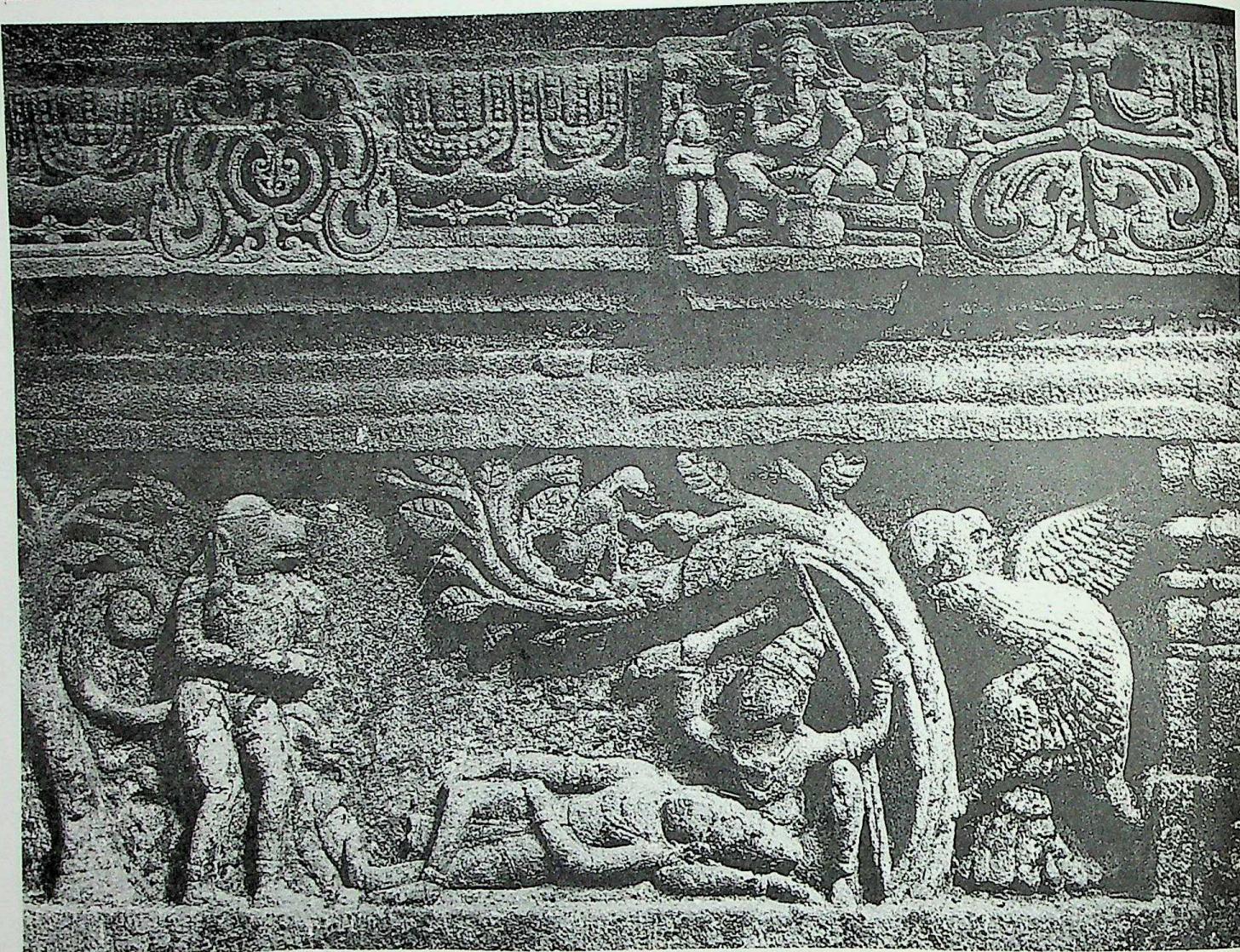


Plate No. 225

the *Badari* fruit to the *manes*. According to the *Vishnu Purana*, “Let him present to the *manes*, balls of meat mixed with curds, barley and *Badari*, with the part of his hand sacred to the gods. . .”<sup>203</sup>

The tree is frequently mentioned in the folk cults based on the epic *Ramayana*. When Ramachandra was searching for Sita who had been abducted by Ravana, he came across a *Badari* tree. The trees those days could hear, see and talk (mythologically) or may be these attributes were given to the trees because of the belief in the presence of tree spirits. The tree (or the *vanadevata* or the *yaksha*) told Ramachandra about the abduction of Sita by Ravana and pointed to a piece of clothing entangled in its branches which he said was a part of her dress and also mentioned that he had tried to save her, and pointed towards the direction in which Ravana had taken her. Rama blessed the tree for having tried to save Sita and gave it a boon that no matter how badly it got cut and mangled, it will not die and its branches will bring out fresh leaves, and that is the reason for the tree to be hardy and to grow in arid zones.<sup>204</sup>

The *Badari* tree is also mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. The tree is sacred to Vishnu, and Vishnu is called Badarinatha, the Lord of *Badari* tree. The town of Badrinath in the Garhwal mountains, one of the four *dhams* or sacred places of pilgrimage for Hindus, is associated with this tree and may be earlier an ancient tree cult associated with it existed there.

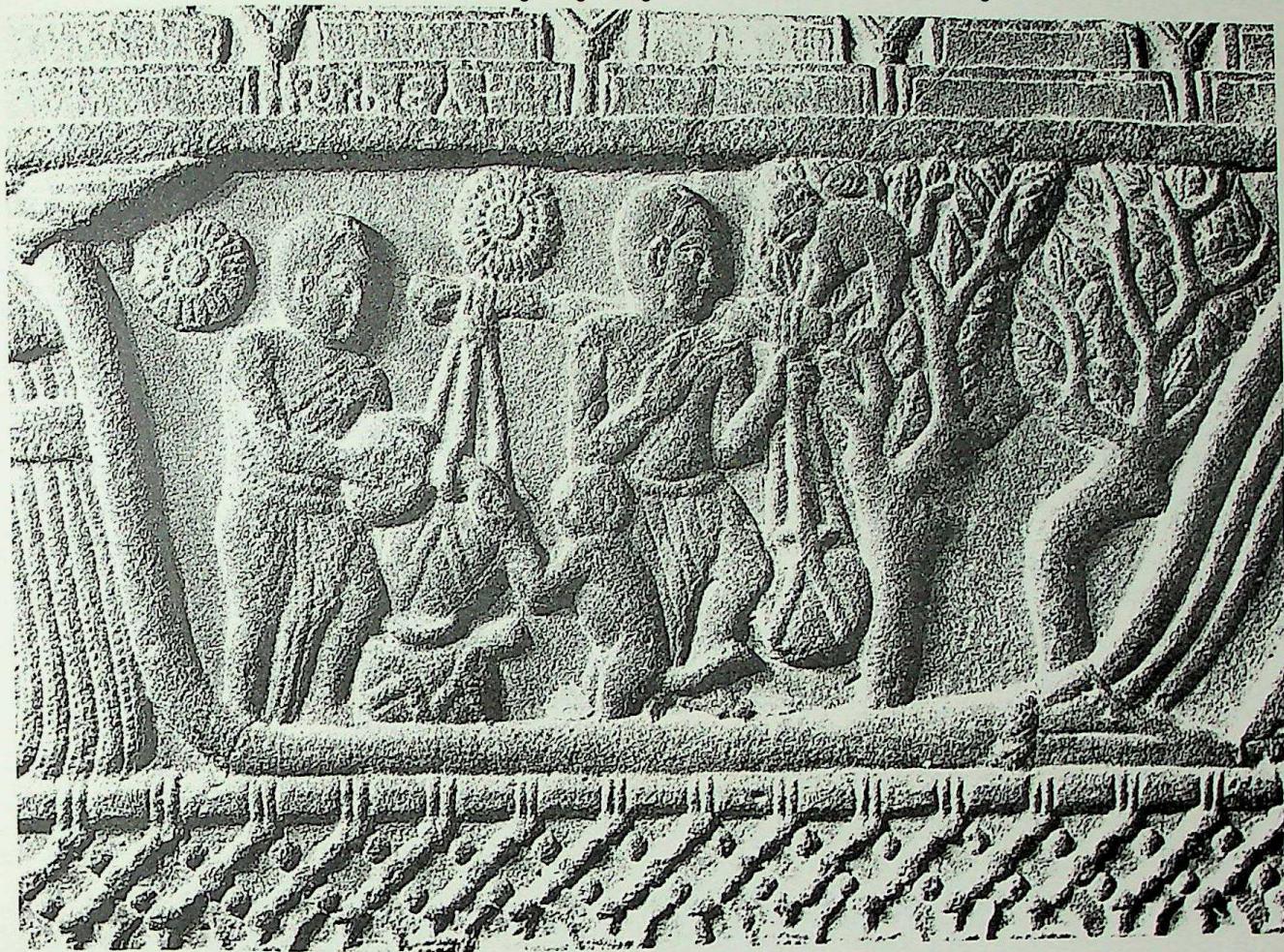


Plate No. 226

In spite of the great importance attached to the *Badari* tree, it is not sculpted often on temples. The most well known sculpture of the tree is from Deogarh showing Nara and Narayana meditating under it (pl.224). In plate 225, a scene from the *Ramayana* shows Rama under the *Badari* tree and Hanuman standing before him. Lakshmana struck by Meghanada with the *Nagastra* lies unconscious on the ground. Garuda, the mount of Vishnu and the enemy of *nagas* is invoked to ward off the *naga*. He is seen on the right side of the panel resting his back against the *Badari* tree. On his arrival, the *naga* out of fear disappears and subsequently Lakshmana regains consciousness.

Plate 226 shows a scene from the *Jatakas*. Two pilgrims, the one on the left giving water to a monkey, and the other giving food to another monkey sitting on a *Badari* tree. *Badari* tree grows wild in India, particularly near villages.

Carbonized fruits of *Badari* were found at Navdatoli (1660-1400 B.C.), also from Kaundinayapur, Ter and Inamgoan (Vishnu Mitre).<sup>205</sup>

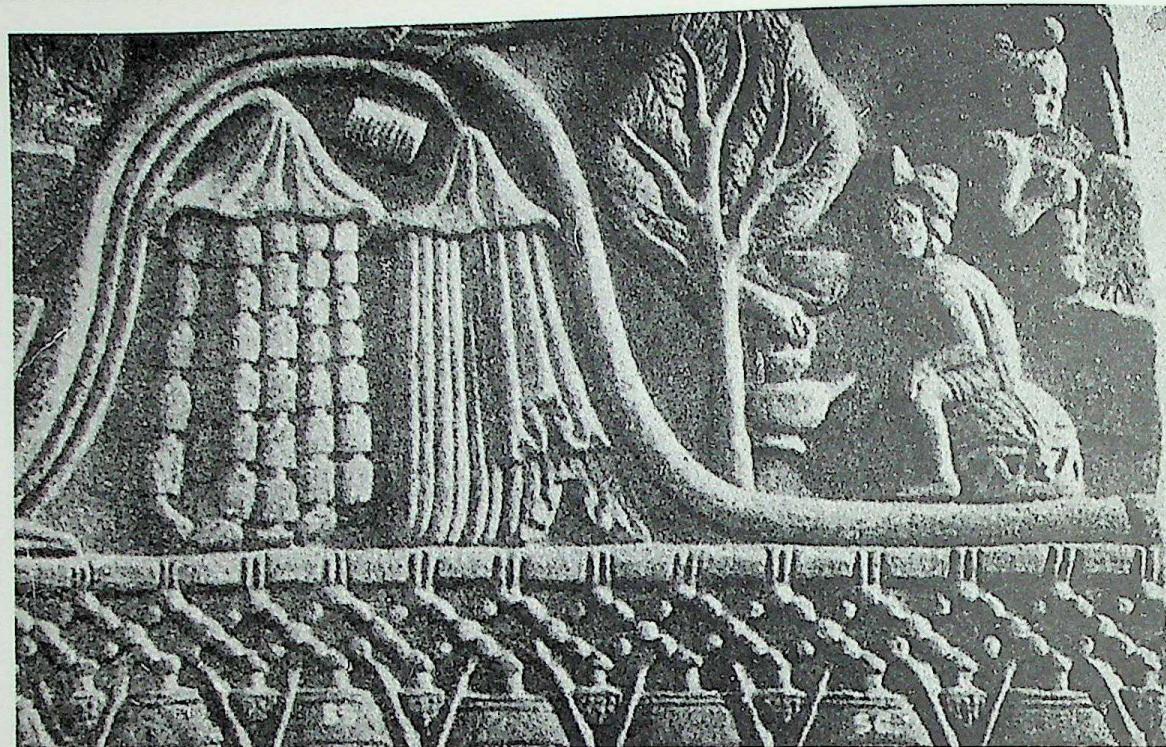


Plate No. 227

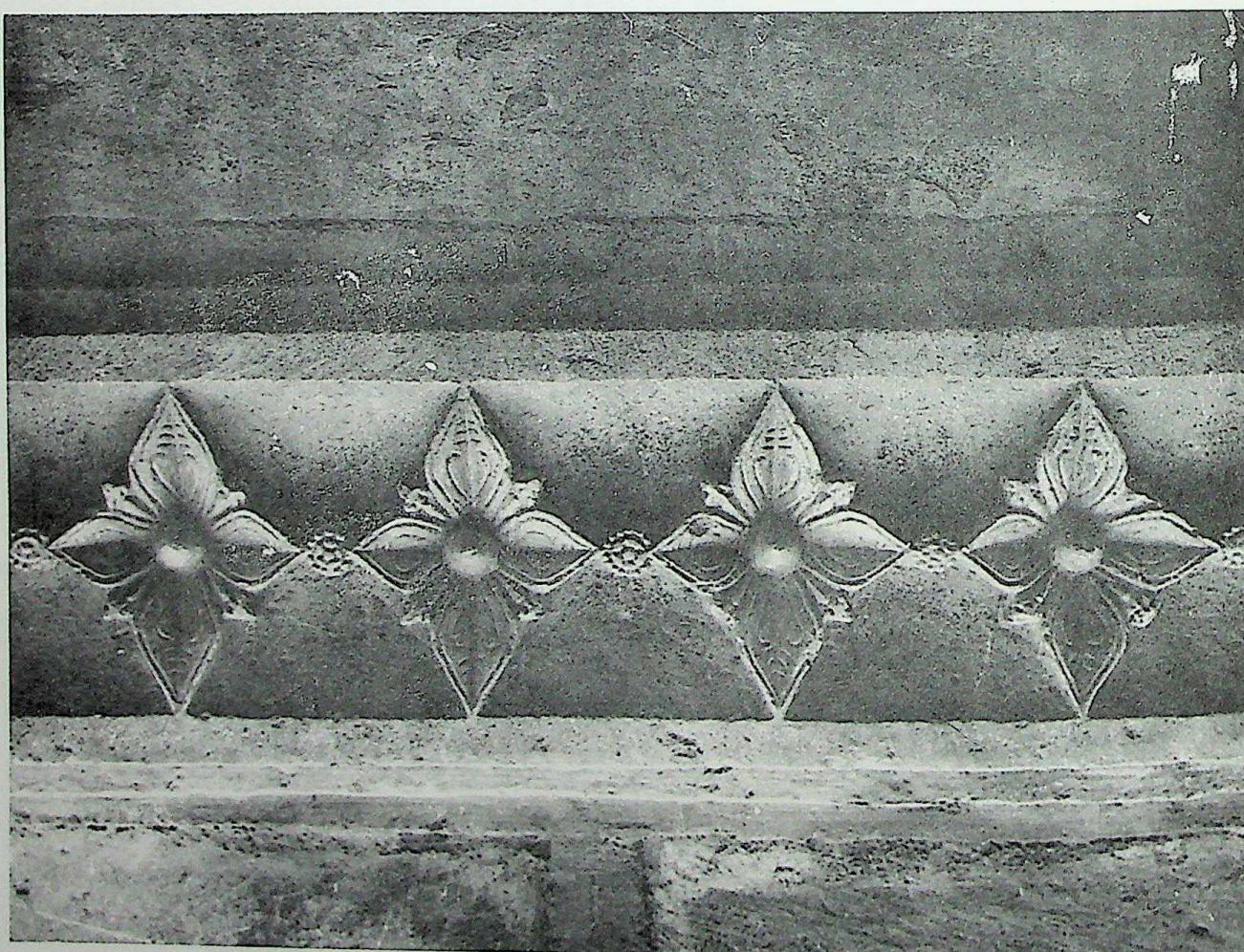


Plate No. 228

Plate No. 229



Plate No. 231



Plate No. 230

Plate No. 233

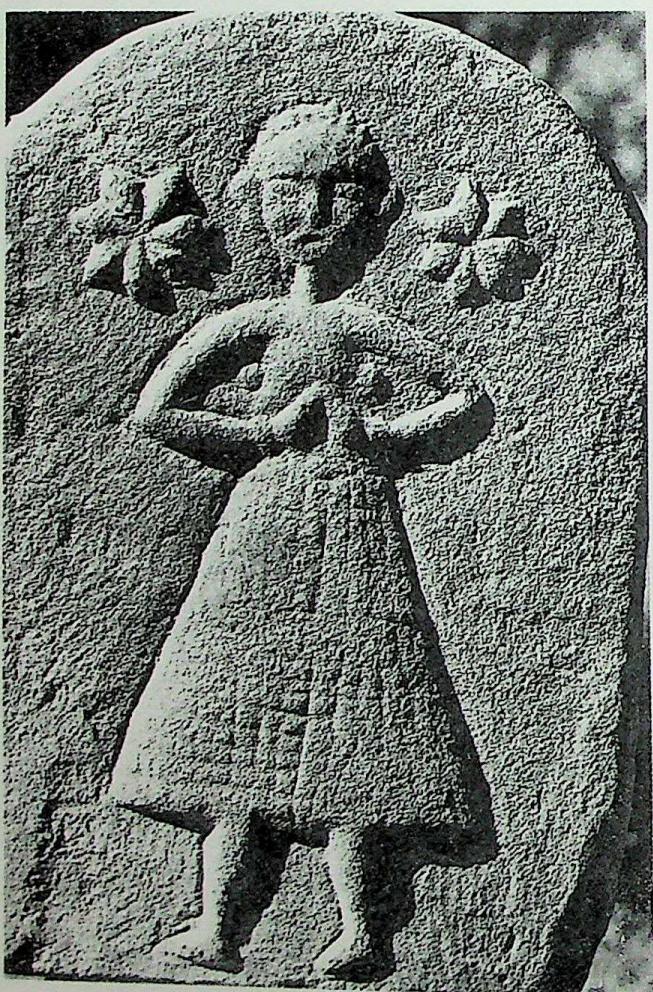
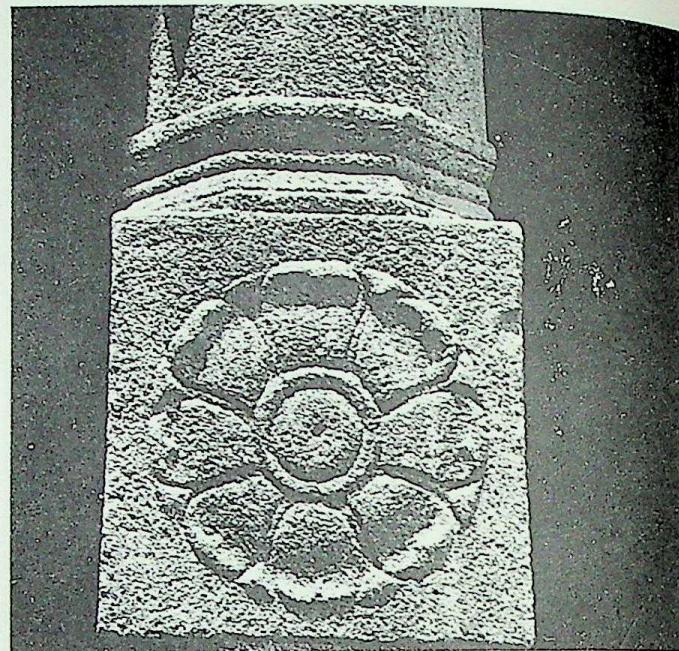


Plate No. 232



Plate No. 234

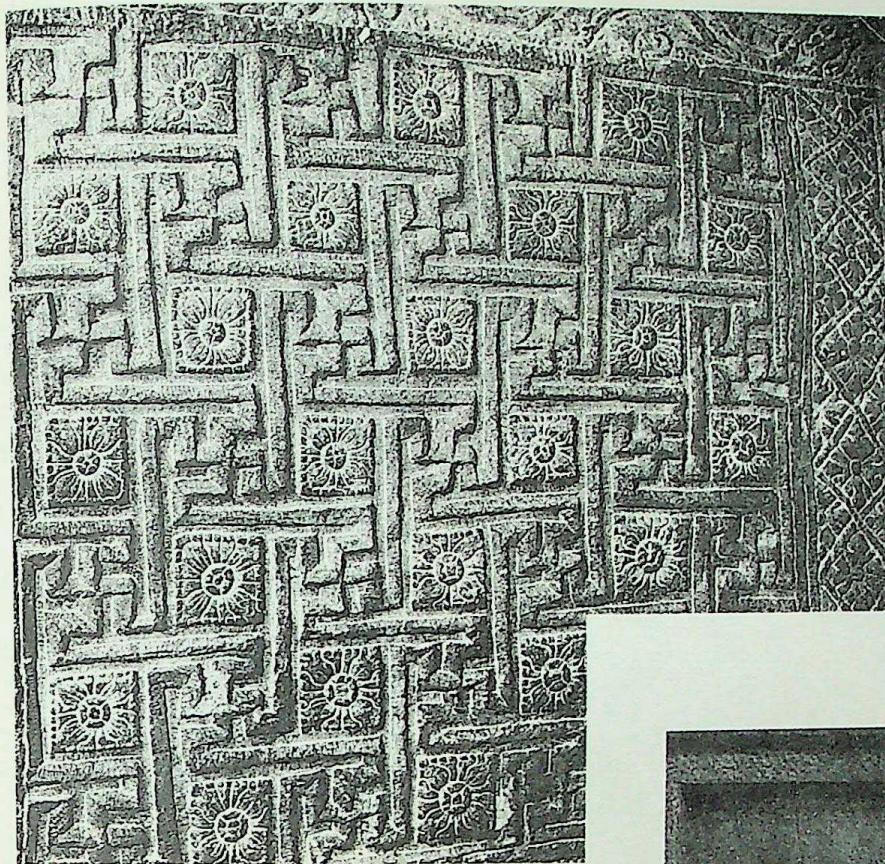
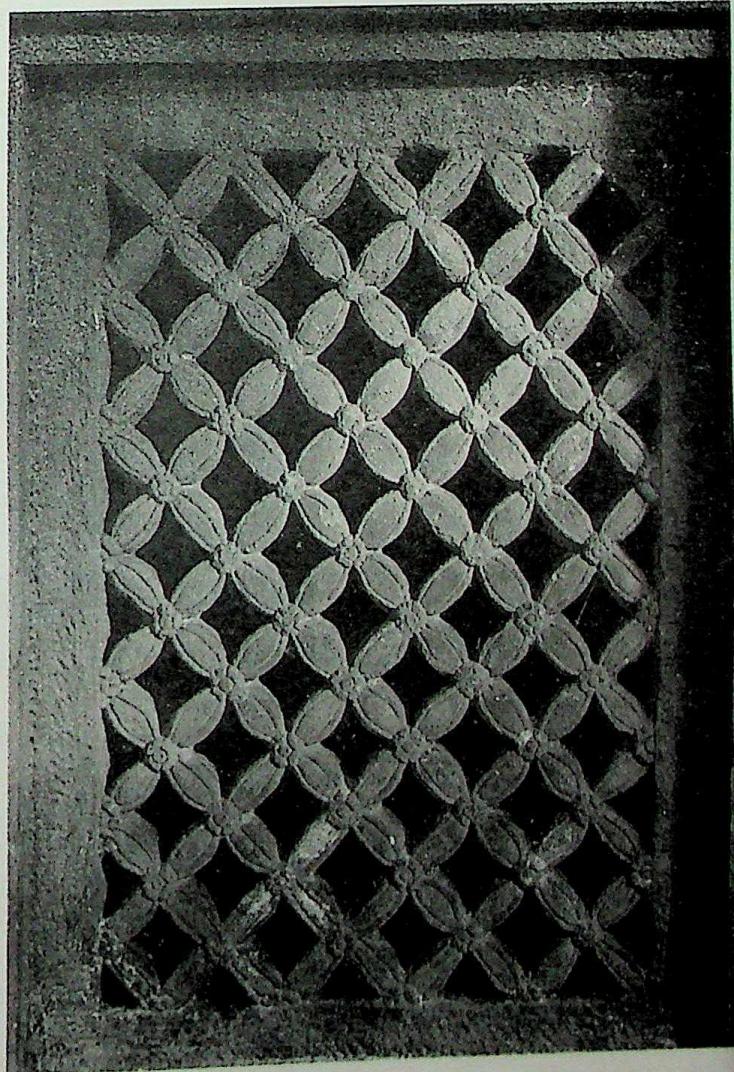


Plate No. 235

Plate No. 236



183



Plate No. 237

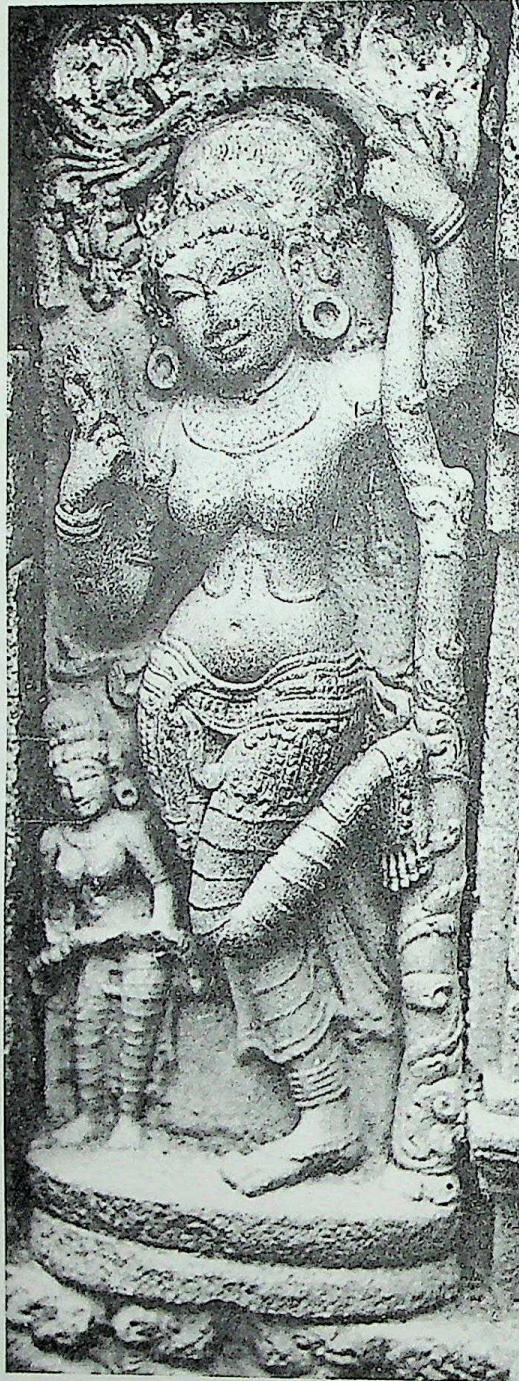


Plate No. 239



Plate No. 238

Chart I: Four petal flower motifs sculptured on temples

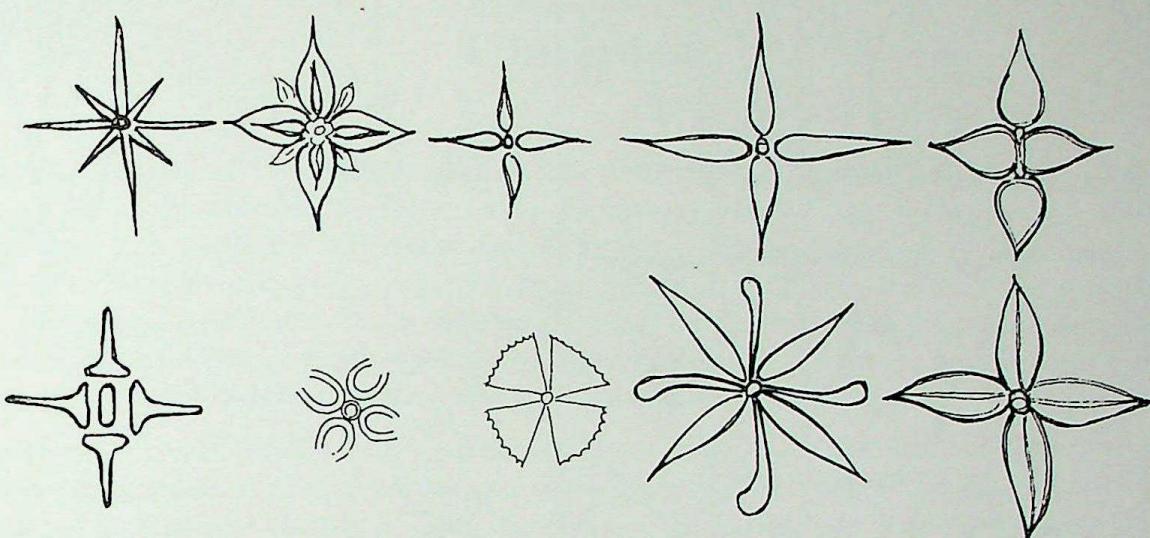
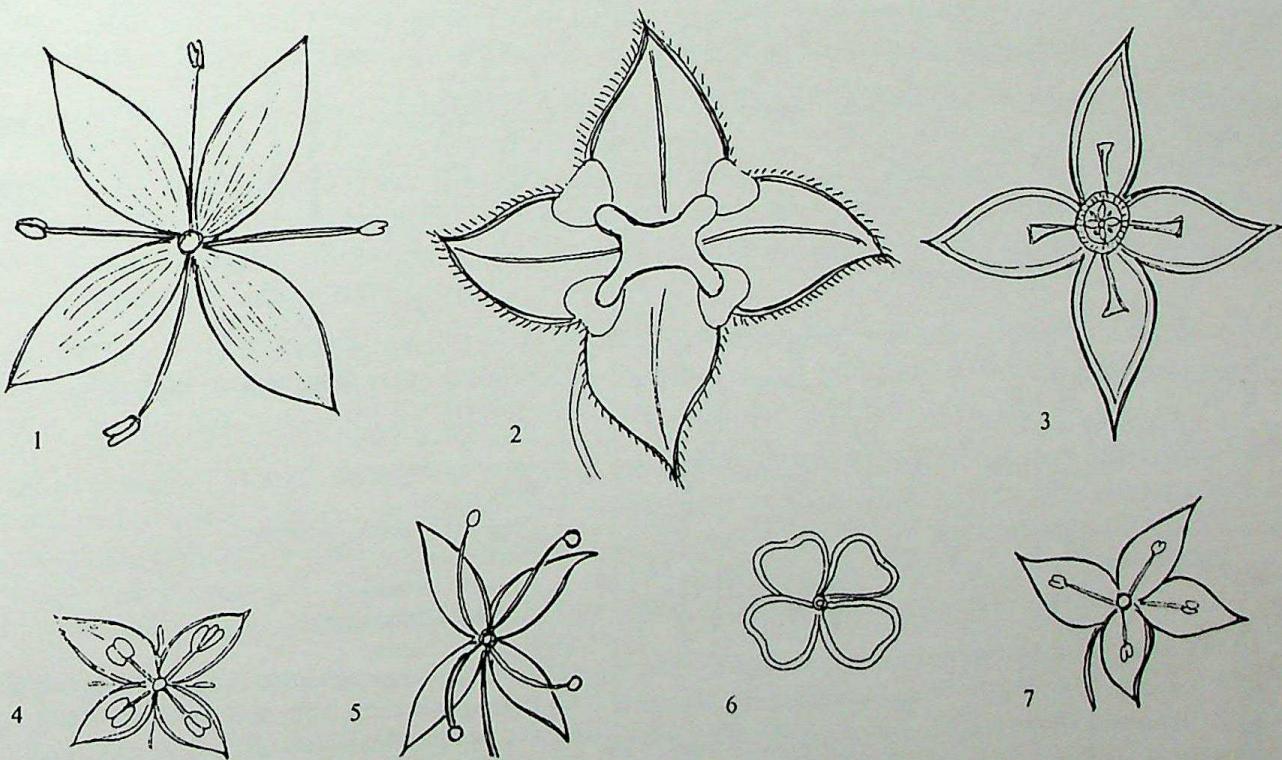
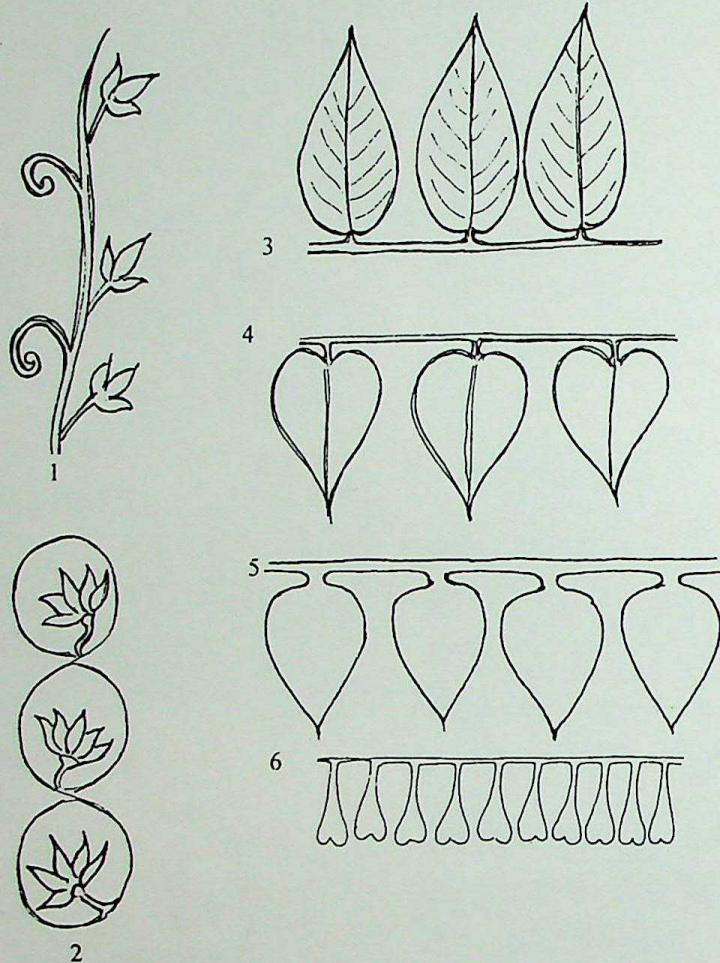


Chart II: Four petal flowers from Tamil Nadu

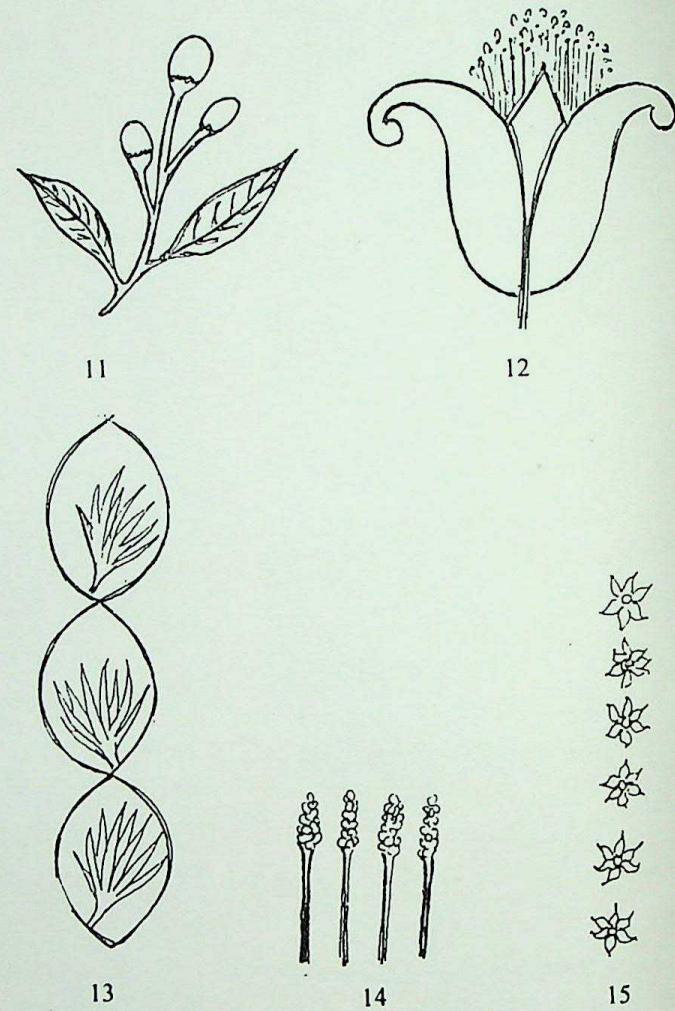
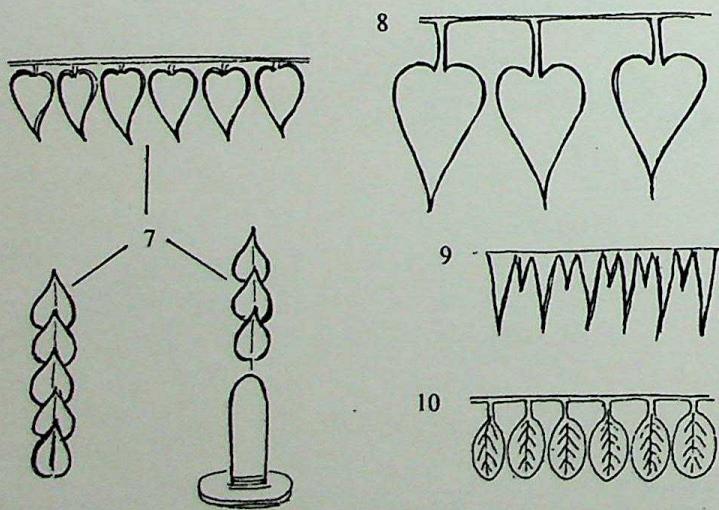


1. *Scoparia dulcis* Linn., F. Scrophulariaceae
2. Female flower. *Reidia floribunda* Wight. F. Euphorbiaceae.
3. *Cayratia pedata* (Lour.)
4. Male Flower. *Pilea melastomoides* Weld., F. Urticaceae
5. Male Flower, *Cicca acida* (L.) Merr.  
*C. disticha* L., F. Euphorbiaceae
6. *Combretum ovalifolium*. Roxb.
7. *Embelia bassal*

## Decorations on Vijayanagar, Hampi, Ranakpur temples



## Pillar Decorations



- 1-2. Ranakpur, Mount Abu, Rajasthan and Padmanabha Temple, Trivandrum, Kerala
3. Unidentified leaves
4. Aswattha leaves
5. Betel leaves
6. Unidentified leaves or Petals
7. Betel leaves
8. Aswattha leaves
9. Ashoka or Mango leaves
10. Nyagrodha leaves.
11. Fruits of *Murraya paniculata*; Temple of Mukhalingam, Orissa
12. *Bombax ceiba* linn; Rajim, Rajiv Lochana Temple
13. *Gloriosa superba*; Temples of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu
14. Sheaves of wheat; Bharhut
15. *Mimusop relengi* linn; Gujarat and Rajasthan Temples

## 3

## Conclusion

India is a vast country with multiple languages, customs and traditions but there is no evidence to show that people in ancient India travelled freely except on pilgrimage, covering long distances which would have familiarised them with the flora of different regions for plants to be sculpted on temples in areas other than their natural habitats. There are only two possible explanations for this. One, that the plants being associated with legends were sculpted along with the legends irrespective of the fact that the said plants did not grow in the vicinity of the temples where they are sculpted. Second possibility is of the artisans being commissioned from different regions by kings and others patronising temple construction.

Temple architecture being religious in nature, was bound to have religious motif and legends sculpted on them. Since temples are mostly dedicated to a particular cult, the legends connected with that cult were bound to be depicted and that includes plant motifs also. In such a case the artisans must have come from a region where the plants grew and being familiar with them, sculpted them on temples even thousands of miles away from their natural habitat for example the sculptures of *Livistona chinensis* sculpted on *Sanchi stupas*. This point is again clearly brought out in a panel from the ruined Vishnu temple at Avantipur in Kashmir. The sculpture shows a king and a queen watching a woman dance and on either side of the panel is sculpted a banana plant. But banana plants do not grow in the Avantipur area of Kashmir, unless they have been introduced recently.

A large number of plants are sculpted on temples, plants which are not considered indigenous to India, such as the Pineapple and the Custard apple. According to Randhawa, both the plants were brought to India in the 16th century A.D. by the Portuguese from Brazil. Pineapple is sculpted on the *Vanamala of Varaha Avatara* of Vishnu in the Udayagiri cave temple in Madhya Pradesh, dated 5th century A.D. Custard apple (*Sharifa*) is represented on the Kalpalata of Bharhut dated C.2nd Cent. B.C. Obviously, therefore, both the plants, pine apple and custard apple were indigenous to India.

Similarly the custard apple is sculpted at Bharhut, circa 2nd century B.C. It is also mentioned in the *Ramayana* and its fruit called *Sitaphal* (*Sharifa*) because Sita used to eat the fruits while on exile with her husband Ramachandra. The date of the *Ramayana* is controversial and is dated circa 200 B.C.-A.D.200.

Buddhist *Stupas* of Sanchi and Bharhut as well as the Kushan sculptures at Mathura have a large number of plants sculpted on them. Some of these plants though they grow in India, do not at present grow in these areas. This can be explained by the changing environment. Buddhists' love and care for trees and other plants made them adorn their *stupas* and *chaityas* with the sculpture of flora and fauna. Their belief in the presence of Tree spirits made them worship a large number of trees and trees were bound to decorate their shrines.

*Ketaki* grows wild in Bihar, Bengal, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, coastal areas of Andaman islands, Tamil Nadu and Kerala and is also cultivated in west Uttar Pradesh where it does not flower or fruit, yet the depiction of it on panels from Mathura clearly show the presence of Pandanus flowers in a cone-shaped inflorescence along with its long leaves with their prominent midribs. These panels are dated 1st-2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. Both *Kadamba* and the *Tala* trees are associated with the childhood exploits of Krishna and Balarama. Legends around the two brothers associated with these trees, are profusely sculpted on *vaishnava* temples, particularly the *Kadamba* tree. *Kadamba* and *Tala* trees no longer grow wild in Vrindavana and its surroundings. Whereas a stray *Kadamba* tree is still found in gardens, *Tala* tree is not even visible. Yet both the trees are so intrinsically connected with the childhood exploits of Krishna and Balarama, the trees would most definitely have grown there profusely, as references to, 'a forest of *Tala* trees or a grove of *kadamba* trees', on the banks of the river

Yamuna are quite persistent. The disappearance of these trees in the area adjoining Vrindavana can be explained as due to the ruthless cutting down of trees which resulted in the environment changing, particularly for the *Kadamba* tree which requires more moisture to grow profusely as it perhaps did during Krishna's childhood days. *Kadamba* tree is now being planted to re-create the forests associated with Krishna.

Maize plant is believed to have originated in Mexico and if this is to be accepted then it must have come to India during 12th-13th century A.D. around the time the Hindu and Jain temples of Karnataka, depicting the corn cob in the hand of deities, were constructed. Maize is also believed to have an Indian origin which points to Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Chamba in Himachal Pradesh as places of its origin.

Lotus is the most frequently sculpted floral motif in temples of India but mainly on Buddhist *stupas*, or temples dedicated to Vishnu. Depiction of Lotus in the *shaiva* temples is not very common. *Shaiva* temples include temples dedicated to Shiva, Devi, the Mother Goddess, Skanda-Karttikeya and Ganesha. Whereas the lotus flower is sculpted as a *padmasana* in most temples, the author has not come across lotus plant sculpted complete with leaves, buds, flower and the seed bearing receptacle in the temples of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

It is comparatively easy to identify the plant motifs by their generic names, when it comes to the specific name, it is not always possible. Some plants like the mango have only one name, *Mangifera indica* but the number of mango varieties go up to 700 and they are difficult to identify. Mango fruits sculpted on temples can be round, elongated, beaked, single or in bunches, with leaves or without leaves, long stalked or short stalked and so on. It is not always possible to identify the variety but the generic and the specific name is common to all mango varieties. For the identification of *Vakula* (*Mimusops elengi*), epigraphical evidence deciphered by C.Sivaramamurti had to be relied upon as except for a branch of the tree, nothing else is sculpted, no flowers or fruits. In the case of the Plantain, the banana plant, it is difficult to say which species of the plant is depicted, but I decided to identify it as *Musa paradisiaca* simply because its fruits are eaten and the fruit is offered at temples.

The depiction of a large number of flowers on temples is mainly symbolic. Lotus, for instance symbolises beauty, purity and eternity. The four petalled flowers symbolise the four directions of space: north, south, east and west. The centre of the flower represents the Supreme God controlling equally all the four directions of space. It is through four channels that forces of life, fertility and prosperity ramify throughout the universe. The four petals also symbolise the four *Vedas*: *Rig-Veda*, *Sama-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda* and *Atharva-Veda*; the four stages of life: infancy, childhood, adult age and old age; the four *ashramas* into which the Hindus divide the life span: Brahmacharya, Grihasta, Vanaprast and Sanyasa; the four aims of life: pleasure, success, righteousness and liberation.

The five-petalled floral motif symbolises the five *Jnana-indriyas*, viz., sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing as well as the five basic elements like fire, ether, earth, water, wind. The six-petalled motifs symbolically represent the six directions of space: north, south, east, west, above and below; five senses: touch, taste, hearing, sight, smell plus the mind. Also the six attributes of the Supreme Lord i.e., wisdom, strength, fame, dispassion, wealth and divine powers.

Number seven has magical potency and is considered highly auspicious. Apart from the seven palm trees shot by one arrow by Ramachandra, called the *Saptatala* legend, there are *sapta-rishis*, *sapta-sagar*, *sapta-matrika*, seven streams making up the river Ganga, etc., etc.

After the four-petalled floral motifs, the eight petalled floral motifs are most commonly represented on temples. Number eight represents the eight directions i.e., north, south, east, west, north-west, north-east, south-east, south-west, and represents the suzerainty over the eight directions of space.

In a survey of temples, ancient, medieval and some comparatively recent, it was found that there are two main forms of floral depictions on temples. One is purely decorative and the other has religious meaning behind it. The decorative floral depictions can be stylised, represent a village scene or tell a story with a moral behind it.

The religious depiction of plants on temples is related to their association with gods and goddesses. Such plants are considered as sacred to the deities and planets or they are mentioned in legends pertaining to the deities.

In a country with an area of 32, 80, 483 square kilometres, it is not possible to visit each and every temple, as temples abound in every nook and corner of the country. I have tried to make a representative selection for this study but daresay that I might have missed on some plant motifs in temples I could not visit.

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## Description of Plates

1. pl. motif: *Aegle marmelos*; legend: Hunter and the lion; location: Sri Nanjundesvarar temple, Sivanmalai, T.N. A stylised tree of *Bilva* under which a *Siva-linga* is present. Sitting on the tree is a hunter and on the ground, a lion.
2. pl. motif: *Aegle marmelos*; legend: *Linga-puja*; location: Meenakshi-Sundareshwara temple, Madura, T.N. A *Siva-linga* being worshipped under the tree which has tri-foliate leaves. On the lower right side of the tree is a fruit of *Bilva*.
3. pl. motif: *Aegle marmelos*; legend: *Linga puja*; location: Pancavaresvaram temple, Uraiur, T.N. A *Sadhu* standing under a *Bilva* tree, offering the trifoliate leaves of *Bilva* to the *Siva-linga*. A floral garland is decorating the *Siva-linga*.
4. pl. motif: *Aegle marmelos*; legend: Nammalar; location: Sri Alagiyambirayar temple, T.N. The *shaivite* saint, Nammalar sitting on a pedestal under the *Bilva* tree and two devotees standing with folded hands praying to Shiva.
5. pl. motif: *Albizia lebbek*; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree; location: Bharhut, c, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. Erapatra Nagaraja worshipping the *Sirisha* tree, the *Bodhi* tree of Krakuchhanda. A pedestal under the tree which has floral offerings and floral garlands hanging from the tree. Above the Nagaraja is Erapatra in his serpent form. Three attendants standing besides the *Naga* king. On the upper right of the *Sirisha* tree is a girl and next to her is the image of the Buddha. Lotus flowers floating in the water. Five other trees can be seen.
6. pl. motif: *Albizia lebbek*; legend: *Bodhi* tree of Krakuchhanda; location: Mathura museum. The tree is present inside a railing called *Vedika*. Two umbrellas are also present inside the *vedika*.
7. pl. motif: *Alocasia species, Alstonia scholaris*; legend: a scene from *Romataka Jataka*; location: Mathura museum. Lower panel, a fragment showing on either side a house with tiled roof and a door with bars. On the right side is a plant of *Alocasia* with large-sized leaves and on the left a tree of *Saptaparni*. There are animals in a state of motion. Upper panel: a *yaksha* holding a floral wreath and a tree of *Saptaparni* on his left is in a stage of growth when new branches arise from the middle of the rosette of leaves.
8. pl. motif: *Alstonia scholaris*; legend: *Caitya vriksha*; location: Auwa (Pali, Rajasthan). The tree is enclosed within a *vedika* which has a boundary wall around it and present inside the wall are two umbrellas and two garlands hanging from the upper end of the panel.
9. pl. motif: *Anacardium occidentale*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, 17th cent. A.D., T.N. Cashew plant with nut, leaves and flower are visible.
10. pl. motif: *Ananas cosmosus, Mangifera indica, Bombax ceiba*; legend: *Vanamala* of Vishnu; location: Udaygiri caves, c. 5th cent. A.D., M.P. *Varaha avatara* of Vishnu lifting mother earth from the ocean bed, wearing a garland of never-fading flowers and fruits. Visible are a Pine apple, mango fruit and the five-petaled *Salmali* flowers.
11. pl. motif: *Annona squamosa*; legend: Vishnu; location: Bengal, 9th-10th cent. A.D. Standing Vishnu with a male and a female attendant on either side. Vishnu wearing the *Vaijayantimala* is holding a custard apple in his right hand, the object in his left hand is not clear.
12. pl. motif: *Annona squamosa*; legend: Karttikeya; location: Madhukesvara temple, Mukhalingam, A.P., 8th cent. A.D. Karttikeya sitting on a throne is holding a custard apple in his right hand. His mount, the

peacock is sitting below. Two flying *Gandharvas* are present above, men and women in various dance poses are present below. The panel has a border of four-petalled flowers.

13. pl. motif: *Annona squamosa*; legend: *Sujata Jataka*; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C. Two custard apples along with leaves are present in the centre. On the left is a mythical animal, a horse with a mane and with a beak of a parrot. Next to the custard apples is a pastoral scene showing two men and a cow. One man is feeding grass to the cow and the second man is watching.
14. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: Krishna and the *vastraharana* scene; location: Bengal, 17th cent. A.D. terracotta. Krishna on the *Kadamba* tree playing the flute. Naked *gopis* pleading for the return of their clothes hanging on the tree. Four large globular fruits of *Kadamba* with criss-cross lines depicting the fuzziness of the fruits.
15. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: *vastraharana* scene; location: Brihadeshwara temple, Thanjavur, 9th-10th cent. A.D., T.N. Krishna sitting on the tree and the *gopis* standing below pleading for the return of their clothes.
16. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: *Kaliyadaman*; location: Bhubaneshwara temple, c. 7th cent. A.D., Orissa. A highly stylised tree of *Kadamba* with round objects depicting the fruit. No leaves are present. Krishna dancing on the heads of the serpent and the wives of Kaliyanaga pleading with Krishna to spare his life.
17. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: a woman with a goblet of wine; location: at present Lucknow museum. A woman holding a goblet of wine and standing under a *Kadamba* tree. The panel is probably of Kushan period.
18. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: *vrikshaka*; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C. A naked woman standing cross-legged under the *Kadamba* tree and holding the branch of the tree with both hands. She is wearing heavy anklets, bangles, ear-rings and the jewelled waist girdle, *mekhala*.
19. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: woman under a tree; location: Mathura, 2nd cent. A.D. A woman performing the sword dance under a flowering tree of *Kadamba*. The tree has leaves and globular bunches of flowers.
20. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: Bachchanalian scene, 2nd cent. A.D. location: Mathura, U.P. A man and two women under the *Kadamba* tree. The man is drunk and the women are naked except for the jewellery they are wearing.
21. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: worship of the tree; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. People are offering floral garlands in worship to the tree. On both sides of the panel is a border of *Nymphaea* buds.
22. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; *Mangifera indica*; legend: *Yaksha*; location: Sanchi, 1st cent. B.C., M.P. A *Yaksha* is standing in the doorway with mango fruits hanging on the upper right side and *Kadamba* fruits with leaves on the left.
23. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: an amorous couple; location: Brahmeshvara temple, c. 1060 A.D., Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. Even though the tree is stylised, the leaves and the fruit are clear.
24. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*, *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: *Gaja*; location: Udayagir, Ganesha Gumpha, Orissa. The elephant is carrying a full blown lotus flower and a branch of the *Kadamba* tree in his trunk. The branch of the *Kadamba* has large leaves and near globular fruit.
25. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: Surpanakha episode; location: Gupta temple, 6th cent. A.D., Deogarh, M.P. Rama holding his bow is sitting on a rock, Sita is standing besides him. Lakshmana

holding Surpanakha's hair with one hand and with one arm raised is about to cut off her nose with a sword. In the background is a flowering tree of *Kadamba*.

26. pl. motif: *Anthocephalus cadamba*, *Mangifera indica*; legend: Ahalya *uddhar*; location: Gupta temple, 6th cent. A.D., Deogarh, M.P. Ahalya cursed to become a stone till Ramachandra touched the stone. Rama holding his bow is sitting on a stone and his right hand is on Ahalya who has regained her normal woman's form. Lakshmana is standing beside Rama and next to him is *rishi* Gautama, husband of Ahalya. Behind Rama are bunches of mango fruit arising from a rosette of leaves. Above the *rishi* is a flowering tree of *Kadamba*.
27. pl. motif: *Artabotrys hexapetalus*, lotus bud; legend: decorative stone fragment; location: Bharhut, 2nd Cent B.C., M.P., at present Tulsi Sangrahalaya, Ramban. The pinnate leaf with the two top leaflets curved as tendrils of the *Artabotrys* and a lotus bud, are sculpted on the stone.
28. pl. motif: *Artocarpus incisa*, *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Saraca asoca*, *Vitis vinifera*; legend: Buddha's begging bowl; c. 2nd cent. A.D.; location: Sadar Bazar, Mathura, U.P. The bowl in the shape of a lotus flower with lotus petals sculpted round it. On the upper portion is a row of plants in a wreath like manner. Visible are: the grape vine with five-lobed leaves and bunches of grapes, the bread fruit complete with fruit and leaves, the *Ashoka* plant bearing leaves and flowers.
29. pl. motif: *Artocarpus incisa*, *Helianthus annuus*; legend: a hunting scene; location: Rani Gumpha cave, Udaigiri, 2nd cent. B.C. Orissa. A King is shooting an arrow and a second man standing with a bow, a boy is holding an umbrella over the King. A woman has climbed the Bread fruit tree out of fear. The deer are running. Between the deer and the king is a plant showing five large-sized capitula of *Helianthus*, the Sunflower.
30. pl. motif: *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Mangifera indica*, 3, 4, 5-petalled flowers, *Nymphaea* flowers; legend: *Jataka* story; location: Bharhut, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A large-sized Jackfruit with a leaf is present on the left side of the panel. In the centre is a tree of mango with a platform under it on which *Nymphaea* flowers and 3, 4, 5-petalled flowers offered in worship are lying. Six deer, three on either side are paying homage to the *Bodhi* tree, mango.
31. pl. motif: *Artocarpus heterophyllus*; legend: *Linga puja*; location: Meenakshi-Sundareshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Madura, T.N. Jackfruit tree under which a holy man is worshipping the *Siva-linga*. His hands are on top of the *Siva-linga* and his water pot, the *Kamandala* is lying besides him. Two figures are visible on the tree, very likely tree spirits.
32. pl. motif: *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Nagaraja Mucchalinda being worshipped; location: Panni, M.P. The five-hooded *Naga* image is being worshipped by two men standing on either side of it. Below the *Naga* image is a lotus plant complete with flower buds, flowers and leaves. The *Naga* image is installed under a tree of Jackfruit. Floral garlands are hanging from the tree branches.
33. pl. motif: *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Raphanus sativa*; legend: a deity sitting with articles of *puja* offerings; location: Mohini temple, c. late 8th cent. A.D. Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. The figure is mutilated but very likely the deity is Ganesha with his trunk broken. He is four-armed and holding a bowl of *modakas* in his natural right hand, a radish in his natural left, a *parasu* and the *akshamala* in the back hands. A Jackfruit and other articles are lying below his seat, probably as offerings. The Jackfruit is complete with its short curved stalk.
34. pl. motif: *Artocarpus heterophyllus*; legend: two figures; location: Mohini temple, c. late 8th cent. A.D. Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. Two male figures standing cross-legged, their body stance suggest they are dancing. The figure on the left is holding a mace and the one on the right is carrying a trident. On the pedestal below the figures, two Jackfruits are lying.

35. pl. motif: *Averrhoa carambola, Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: *Vrikshaka*; location: Parasarameshwar temple, Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. A woman with her left arm round the tree trunk. The tree of *Kamrak* with the angular fruits arising direct from the tree trunk. She is holding a lotus flower in her right hand. A large-sized fully opened lotus flower is sculpted at the base of the tree.

36. pl. motif: *Bambusa* species; legend: *Linga puja*; location: Meenakshi temple, 17th cent. A.D., Madura, T.N. A *Siva-linga* present in a Bamboo grove and two men worshipping it.

37. pl. motif: *Bambusa* species; legend: Crow and the *Siva-linga*; location: Meenakshi temple, Madura, Tamil Nadu. A *Siva-linga* present under a Bamboo plant and a large sized crow sitting on the pedestal of the *Siva-linga*.

38. pl. motif: *Bambusa* species, *Mesua ferrea, Mangifera indica*; legend: *Venuvana*; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. Two thickets of *Venu*, the Bamboo plant on either side. On the upper right hand of the panel, a flowering tree of *Naga Kesar*, on the upper left a stylised flowering tree (could be *Saraca asoca*). On the lower left side a mango tree with fruits, and on the right side a flowering tree, badly eroded. Buddha is being symbolically worshipped as the mango tree.

39. pl. motif: *Bauhinia variegata*; legend: worship of the tree; location: Bharhut, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. The lower part of the tree is enclosed by a railing. A platform under the tree has an ornamental design of flowers and leaves. Men are either standing or sitting offering worship. Two flying *Gandharvas* are offering flowers in worship.

40. pl. motif: *Bombax ceiba*; legend: Hariti and Panchika; location: Gandhara, c. 3rd cent A.D., at present Chandigarh museum, Punjab. Hariti and Panchika are standing on either side of a *Salmali* tree which has five large petalled flowers and no leaves.

41. pl. motif: *Bombax ceiba*; legend: Mayadevi holding a branch of the tree; location: Gandhara (now in Pakistan). Maya, mother of Siddhartha Gautama standing under a tree of *Salmali* and holding a branch of the tree. The tree is mutilated but the *Salmali* flowers are visible.

42. pl. motif: *Bombax ceiba*; legend: a scene from the Ramayana; location: Shringverpur, c. 5th cent. A.D., Allahabad, U.P. A group of monkey-faced beings, one of whom could be Hanuman. The extreme left figure is carrying a quiver with five arrows and standing under a tree of *Salmali*. The petals of the flowers turn backwards and when viewed from above, look rounded. The plant on the upper right hand is not identifiable.

43. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: Palmyra Capital, 1st cent. B.C., location: Pawaya, M.P. The *Tala* tree with its fan-shaped leaves, round fruits and columnar stem are all visible.

44. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: Dhenuka vadu; location: Pawaya, M.P. The *Tala* tree with its fan-shaped leaves and the mutilated body of the donkey on the tree.

45. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: Dhenuka vadu; location: Vidisa, c. 8th-9th cent. A.D., M.P. The middle panel has a *Tala* tree with abundant fruits. The leaves are stylised. On the left, Balarama is holding Dhenuka *asura* who has assumed a human form and is about to throw him on the *Tala* tree. On the right is Dhenuka lying dead.

46. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: *Saptatala*; location: Amriteshvara temple, Amritapura, Karnataka. Present are seven *Tala* trees with their characteristic horizontal markings on the tree trunk. Ramachandra with his bow after shooting an arrow at the trees, is standing on the left. The arrow having pierced through the trees is denoted by a downward moving line. There is a snake under the trees. Lakshman, Hanuman and Sugriva are watching the scene from behind the trees.

47. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: an amorous couple; location: Deobaloda, Raipur, M.P. The sculpture on the temple wall shows an erotic scene between two trees of *Tala*. The horizontal markings on the columnar stem and the fan-shaped leaves are visible.

48. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. A fan-shaped leaf on the *Tala* tree with a short curved petiole, is sculpted as pillar decoration.

49. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: Extraction of toddy and offering it to a warrior; location: Veer Bhadra Swami temple, Macherla, A.P. On the left a woman is climbing the *Tala* tree to extract toddy and next to her under another *Tala* tree, a woman is offering toddy from a pot to a warrior.

50. pl. motif: *Borassus flabellifer*; legend: two men looking out of the window; location: Bharhut c.2nd cent B.C., M.P. Below the window are two perfectly sculpted trees of *Tala* with all the distinguishing marks such as the fan-shaped leaves, columnar trunk with horizontal markings and globular fruits in bunches.

51. pl. motif: *Calotropis gigantea*; legend: Cow and the *linga*; location: Meenakshi temple, Madura, 17th cent. A.D., T.N. A *Siva-Linga* present under a *Calotropis* plant and a cow is pouring her milk on the *lingam*.

52. pl. motif: *Calotropis gigantea*; legend: Parvati sitting under the tree; location: Amma temple, Tiruvayyaru, T.N. A clear depiction of the plant with its leaves and flowers. On either side, below Parvati is a depiction resembling *Calotropis pollinea*.

53. pl. motif: *Calotropis gigantea*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. The depiction is of the mango-shaped fruits of *Calotropis gigantea*.

54. pl. motif: *Calotropis gigantea*; legend: woman with a sword; location: Mathura. A naked woman standing under a flowering *Calotropis* plant. The woman with an elaborate hairstyle has her left hand resting on her hip and is holding a sword in her right hand.

55. pl. motif: *Capsicum annuum*; legend: a *rishi* sitting under the plant; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. Sitting on rocks under the plant is a *rishi*. The plant has clear flowers, fruits and leaves of *Capsicum* sculpted. The height of the plant motif depicted in plates 55 and 56 is much more than in reality.

56. pl. motif: *Capsicum annuum*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. The flowers, fruits and leaves are clear.

57. pl. motif: *Cassia fistula*; legend: A Jain deity with two women attendants; location: Jain cave temple, Aihole, c. 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. A Jain deity is standing under the tree flanked on either side by a woman attendant. The slightly stylised inflorescence and the large pinnate leaves are clear. There are two figures on the trees who could be *vanadevatas* or *yakshas*.

58. pl. motif: *Cassia fistula*, *Papavar somniferum*; legend: two women holding a flowering branch of *amaltas*. 7th cent. A.D. location: Jain cave temple, Aihole. Karnataka. The woman on the right is also holding a single inflorescence in her left hand. Both women are standing on capsules of poppy. The only discrepancy in the depiction of the floral motif is that some of the inflorescences are turned upwards. In the upper middle above the *amaltas* is a half lotus flower showing early stage of the seed bearing receptacle.

59. pl. motif: *Citrus limon* (Lemon); legend: a deity holding a fruit; location: Nalanda museum, Bihar. A female deity wearing an ornamental jewelled crown, holding a fruit of lemon in her right hand.

60. pl. motif: *Citrus medica* (Citron); legend: Yakka Sarvanubhatt; location: Aihole, 8th cent. A.D., at present Udaipur museum, Rajasthan. The *Yaksha* is sitting under a stylised tree holding in his right hand a Citron fruit.

61. pl. motif: *Cocos nucifera*; legend: *Purna Kumbha*; location: Nataraja temple, Chidambaram, T.N. A pillar decoration with the vase of plenty. The mouth of the pot is closed with a coconut fruit. Leaves of the mango tree are also sculpted in the pot along with the fruit.
62. pl. motif: *Cocos nucifera*; legend: *Purna Kumbha*; location: Nageshvaram temple, Kumbakonam, 9th cent. A.D., T.N. The vase of plenty has only a coconut covering its mouth.
63. pl. motif: *Cocos nucifera*; legend: Vishwamitra after creating the coconut tree; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. Vishwamitra besides the two trees of coconut. The trees have large pinnate leaves, globular fruit and the columnar stem with horizontal markings.
64. pl. motif: *Cocos nucifera*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Meenakshi temple, 17th cent. A.D., Madura, T.N. Though the tree is clear with leaves, fruits and the columnar trunk with horizontal markings, the sculpture is not well done.
65. pl. motif: *Cocos nucifera*; legend: Women and trees; location: Sri Viswa Brahma temple, Alampur, A.P. Two women standing between two trees of coconut. The tree on the left has a bunch of coconut fruits and a monkey is climbing the tree. The characteristic rings on the trees are very clear. The tree on the right has two large coconuts growing on it.
66. pl. motif: *Coniferous cones*; legend: Railing post fragment; location: Bharhut, 2nd cent. B.C., at present Tulsi Sangrahalaya, Ramban. An unusual depiction of a bunch of four cones on a tree trunk. The diamond-shaped markings on the cones are due to the closed ovuliferous scales of the cones as seen in the second year growth of the cones.
67. pl. motif: *Couroupita guianensis* (stylised); legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. The flower is stylised as it is difficult to depict. The circular portion is the staminal band round the gynoecium and the elliptical portion above is the staminal band proper.
68. pl. motif: *Cycad*; a leaf resembling the leaf of *Cycas revoluta*; legend: a couple, door jamb detail; location: Mukhalingam temple, 8th cent. A.D., A.P. A couple standing in a door way, the man is caressing the chin of the woman. She is holding a leaf with an unusually long stalk touching the ground. The leaf resembles the Cycad leaf except for the long stalk.
69. pl. motif: *Dalbergia sissoo*; legend: Indra riding an elephant; location: Bhaja caves, 2nd cent. B.C., Maharashtra. Indra is riding an elephant and on his left is a tree of *Shisham* on which a large number of human figures are hanging. The pinnate leaves of the tree are clear.
70. pl. motif: *Durio zibethinus*, *Artocarpus integrifolia*; legend: *Jataka* scene; location: Bharhut, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. On the right of the *Kalpa-valli* are bunches of *Durio* flowers which are aggregated to form a bunch which is round. On the left of the panel are three Jackfruits and birds. In the middle is a scene from the village showing a hut and two men playing *chopet*, a dice game, while two others are looking on.
71. pl. motif: *Elaeocarpus sphaericus*; legend: Saraswati; location: Sri Narasimha temple, Arakere, Karnataka. Saraswati in a dance pose holding the *akshamala* in her lower right hand, *pustak* (book) in her lower left hand; an *ankush*, the elephant goad in the upper right hand and a noose in the lower left hand. She is standing under a canopy of mangoes.
72. pl. motif: *Elaeocarpus sphaericus*; legend: *Yaksha*; location: Pitalkhora, 2nd cent. B.C., Maharashtra. A *Yaksha* wearing a rosary of *Rudraksha* beads, and two strings of *Rudraksha* beads in his coiffure. He is wearing a 5-stringed *yajnopavita*, a short Lion-cloth held with a string. The knot and the loose ends of the string are prominently visible. One hand is holding his head-dress and the other raised arm is broken.
73. pl. motif: *Emlica officinalis*; legend: a group of temples; location: Ratan Deo temples, Dwarhat, Kumaon. Seven temples in a row topped with an *amalaka*, the fluted stone of the fruit of the tree.

74. pl. motif: *Embllica officinalis*; legend: *Amalasaraka*; location: Bhumara, Satna, 5th cent. A.D., M.P. At present Allahabad Museum.

75. pl. motif: *Erythrina variegata*; legend: *Rishipatni*; location: Sri Janardana Perumal Temple, Kerala. The *Mandara* tree with its tri-foliate leaves are clearly depicted though slightly stylised as if they are folded. *Rishipatni* is giving alms, doling them out with a spoon into a *thali* carried by a young man on his head.

76. pl. motif: *Erythrina variegata*; legend: Shiva; location: Meenakshi temple, 17th cent. A.D., Madura, T.N. Shiva seated on rocks under the *Mandara* tree, the trifoliate leaves of which are clear. People paying homage to Shiva.

77. pl. motif: *Erythrina variegata*; legend: *Linga puja*; location: Meenakshi temple, 17th cent. A.D., Madura, T.N. A *Siva-linga* present under the trifoliate leaves and an elephant worshipping it by pouring water on it.

78. pl. motif: *Euphorbia* species and other plants; legend: Miracle of Sravasti; location: Sanchi c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. Gautama Buddha along with the Kashyaps was travelling and they came across a river in flood. Kashyaps went to get a boat to cross the river and on their return saw the Buddha walking on the waters symbolically depicted as lotus flowers floating on the waters. The plants sculpted from upper right hand corner and going clockwise are: *Euphorbia* sp., mango tree and the *Bodhi* tree *Ficus glomerata* under which is a platform, Banana plants, lotus flowers, *Kadamba*, unidentified tree probably belonging to family Magnoliaceae, *Naga Kesar* and the lotus plant.

79. pl. motif: *Fern* leaves; legend: decorative slab; location: Sanchi, at present Lucknow museum. The upper panel has pinnate fern leaves. Also present are spore bearing leaflets called sporophylls characteristic of the Filicales. Lower panel depicts a lotus plant.

80. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*, *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Mangifera indica* and an unidentified plant; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree; location: Sanchi stupa, M.P. *Nyagrodha* tree, one of the *bodhi* trees is clearly sculpted with its oval-shaped leaves, hanging roots and figs. Elephants are offering lotus buds to the *Bodhi* tree, and floral garlands as offerings are placed on the tree. On the lower left are lotus buds and leaves near which an unidentified tree (probably *Albizia lebbek*) is present with a bunch of flowers at the top. Mango tree in fruit is visible from behind the elephants.

81. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: worship of the *Nyagrodha* tree; location: Sanchi stupa I, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. *Nyagrodha* tree with its oval-shaped leaves and bunches of figs are visible though there are no hanging roots. A stone platform is present under the tree, and a king and a queen with their retinue are worshipping the *Bodhi* tree. There are women *chauri*-bearers and one carrying the royal umbrella over the king. Flying *Gandharvas* are carrying floral garlands for offering to the *Bodhi* tree.

82. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: a deity; location: cave no. 33, Ellora, 6th cent. A.D., Maharashtra. Indra is sitting on his mount, the elephant Airavata, under the *Kalpavriksha*, the *Nyagrodha* tree. On either side are a *Gandharva* and an *apsara*. This *Kalpavriksha* grows in heaven and does not have hanging roots and hence they are missing in this depiction.

83. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: Kali as *Vatarangesvari*; location: Sena, 12th cent. A.D., at present NMD. Kali as *Vatarangesvari*, the goddess of the *Vata* tree (*Nyagrodha*) is sitting on a lotus pedestal under which a man is lying. Being the goddess who kills evil, the severed heads of her victims are hanging from the tree branches, she holds one severed head in her lower left hand and is wearing a necklace of severed heads. There is an elephant on the right hand back side of the goddess. She is eight-armed and in her upper right hand she is holding a sword the blade of which is horizontally behind her head.

84. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend *Dakshinamurti*; location: Sri Brihadeshvarar temple, Gangaikondacholapuram, T.N. Shiva as an ascetic sitting in meditation under the banyan tree. He has

matted locks. There is a serpent on one side and the ascetic's bag hanging on the tree. Shiva's foot rests on the body of Apasmara, the demon of ignorance.

85. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: *Dakshinamurti*; location: Sri Alagiyanaabirayar temple, Tirukkurungudi, T.N. In his *Dakshinamurti* form Shiva sits under the *Nyagrodha* tree with no hanging roots and facing south (*Dakshin*). A parrot and a squirrel are sitting on the tree.
86. Pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: *Andaranda pakshi*; location Sri Alagiyanaambirayar temple, Tirukkurungudi, T.N. Garuda holding an elephant and a tortoise in his hands, and in his beak, a branch of the *Nyagrodha* tree complete with leaves and figs. The diminutive *Balakhilya rishis* are hanging upside down from the tree. Above this depiction is a lotus flower representing the orb of the Sun.
87. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: Garuda and the pot of nectar; location: Sri Alagiyanaambirayar temple, T.N. Garuda holding a pot of nectar is trying to push the tree trunk with his foot to steady the tree so as to save the diminutive *rishis* *Balakhilyas* who are hanging from the tree branch.
88. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: *Kalpavriksha*; location: Besnagar, Vidisha, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. The depiction of the *Nyagrodha* tree is very realistic. Being the wish-fulfilling tree, there are *ashtanidhies* hanging from it consisting of bags full of money, jewellery, clothes etc.
89. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: Krishna as *Vatapatrasayin*; location: Sri Alagiyanaambirayar temple, T.N. According to ancient texts, Vishnu floats on a *Vata* (*Nyagrodha*) leaf during the universal deluge which destroys the entire universe. In this panel the *Vata* leaves, oval in shape with prominent venation are clearly depicted and on one enlarged leaf, Vishnu in his incarnation as Krishna, is lying. On the lower right of the panel, Krishna is sucking the breast of the demoness Putana to put her to death.
90. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis*; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree of Kashyapa; location: Prasenajit pillar, Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C. M.P. A characteristic feature of the *Nyagrodha* tree, aerial roots are clearly depicted. On the stone under the tree six-petalled flowers and banana fruits offered in worship are lying. Six elephants, three on the left and three on the right are worshipping the *Bodhi* tree. Two of the elephants are carrying branches as offerings. On the right, a male figure (mutilated) is standing in a worshipful attitude. Above on the left side is an unidentified plant held sacred as flowers and fruits offered in worship are lying on the platform under the plant.
91. pl. motif: *Ficus benghalensis* var. *Krishnae*; legend: *Kurma Avatar* worshipping *Siva-linga*; location: Sri Kachchhapesvarar temple, Kanchipuram, T.N. Vishnu in his *Kurma* (Tortoise) incarnation is worshipping the *lingam* installed under the tree. Behind the *Kurma*, Vishnu's wife Lakshmi is standing in a worshipful attitude. Birds are sitting on the tree and on the right is Nandi. The shape and size of the leaves vary, some are nearly round, some oval, and some with a pointed apex. The leaves are cupped at the base and different facets of the leaves give an image as if there are different shaped leaves of the tree.
92. pl. motif: *Ficus elastica*; legend: a male figure under the tree; location: Mathura, c. 3rd cent. A.D. A male figure, very likely a *yaksha* is standing under the tree which strongly resembles the tree of *Ficus elastica*.
93. pl. motif: *Ficus glomerata*, *Papavar somniferum*, *Nymphaea stellata* legend: worship of the tree; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. The *Udumbara* tree, the *Bodhi* tree of Kanakamuni is being worshipped by four men, two men are kissing the stone platform under the tree. Floral garlands as offerings are hanging on the tree laden with leaves and figs. The man on the right is holding a pot full of figs and the man on the left is holding a floral garland. On the lower end of the medallion are two flowers of *Nilotpala*, and on the upper end of the medallion are two capsules of poppy on which two figures are standing but only their feet are visible.
94. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: a seal; location: Mohenjodaro, 3rd-4th B.C. A branch of the *Ashvattha* tree with leaves having pointed apices, arise in the middle from an object from which two horned heads of an animal, very likely of a deer, are arising.

95. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: a hunting scene; location: Sri Alagiyabirayar temple, T.N. An *Ashvattha* tree with birds sitting on it. A man, a woman and a child are trying to kill the birds. The child is carrying a bow and arrow, the man holding an unidentified object, and the woman has a catapult.

96. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: Dhyan-Buddha; location: Ratnagiri, Orissa. Buddha is sitting in meditation under the *Bodhi* tree, which is represented by a few branches of *Ashvattha* with its leaves with pointed apices.

97. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree of Sakyamuni, Gautama Buddha; location: Prasenajit pillar, Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. *Ashvattha* tree is in the middle towards the upper side of the panel. There is an umbrella over it and floral garlands hanging from it. Four men standing besides it, one offering a floral garland. On the stone platform below it, offerings of six-petalled flowers, *Nilotpala* flowers and fruits are present. A *Chaitya* surrounds the tree. Two men sitting besides the platform are worshipping the tree, and a man and a woman are standing alongside. Palm trees are sculpted on either side of the *Bodhi* tree with their leaves aggregated at the top.

98. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. On the right lower end is a tree of *Ashvattha* under which is present a stone platform with a floral design. At the upper end are the kings of the four quarters on their elephants, come to worship the *Bodhi* tree. The four kings having alighted from their mounts are sculpted next to the *Bodhi* tree and are seen worshipping the tree. One elephant with his attendant is seen nearby.

99. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*, *Alstonia scholaris*, *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: monkeys offering honey to the *Bodhi* tree; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. *Ashvattha* tree is on the left with floral garlands hanging from it and a stone platform below it. Monkeys are offering honey to the *Bodhi* tree. Two men and two women are standing beside the tree. Two women and a child are kneeling and worshipping the tree. On the upper side of the panel are trees of *Alstonia scholaris* with floral garlands hanging on them and also a tree of *Anthocephalus cadamba*.

100. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: Head of a *chowrie*-bearer; location: Mathura c. 300 A.D. (at present Madras museum) A broken piece, the branch of the *Ashvattha* tree with three leaves. The shape and venation of the leaves is unmistakable.

101. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree; location: Amaravati c. 150 A.D., A.P. The *Bodhi* tree is symbolically being worshipped as the Buddha. Inspite of the corroding of the stone, the leaves of *Ashvattha* tree are very clear.

102. pl. motif: *Ficus religiosa*; legend: *Vrikshachaitya*; location: Amaravati c. 150 A.D., A.P. A *Vihara* is constructed around the *vrikshachaitya*. Flying *Gandharavas* are present on both sides of the *Bodhi* tree and garlands as offerings are hanging on the tree.

103. pl. motif: *Glochidion velutinum*; legend: *Vrikshaka*; location: Mathura c. 2nd cent. A.D. A *Vrikshaka*, a nude woman, heavily ornamented and wearing a jewelled waist girdle is standing cross-legged on a prone dwarf, holding with her right hand the *ratnopavita*. She is standing under a flowering tree of *Glochidion*. The tree has elliptical opposite leaves and six-petalled flowers.

104. pl. motif: *Helianthus annuus*; legend: Decorative pillar; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. Two mythical animals facing right and left with their backs touching. In between the two animals is a bunch of seven capitula of *Helianthus*.

105. pl. motif: *Jasminum sambac*; legend: Prince Siddhartha Gautama; location: freise no. 3, Goli sculptures, at present Madras museum. Prince Siddhartha is standing holding a bunch of Jasmine flowers in his right hand and his left hand is resting on his hip. He is flanked by two attendants, one carrying a *chowrie* and the other, an umbrella.

106. pl. motif: *Kigelia africana (pinnata)*: two monkeys holding a large sized fruit of *Kigelia*: location: Kedareshwar temple, Halebid, Karnataka.

107. pl. motif: *Livistona chinensis*, *Musa paradisiaca*, *Mangifera indica*, *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: worship of the *Naga*; location: Sanchi stupa I, M.P. A temple scene, a *naga* being worshipped in the centre. Below young boys are bathing in a pool in which lotuses are growing. Plantain plants are growing on the right lower corner above which is a hermit in his thatched hut. On the right side of the temple is a mango tree and next to it, a tree of *Livistona* palm with its semi-orbicular leaves, columnar tree trunk with horizontal markings.

108. pl. motif: *Livistona chinensis*, *Anthocephalus cadamba*; *Mesua ferrea*; legend: Pastoral scene; location: Sanchi stupa I. The three trees are all in a row above a group of men and women.

109. pl. motif: Lotus flower, *Magnolia* species, *Papavar somniferum*; legend: Medallion; location: Bharhut c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A large sized lotus flower with the image of a *Yaksha* in the centre. On either side on the upper end are two flowering trees of *Magnolia*, the trees are without leaves. The flowers have prominent gynophores. On the lower side of the medallion are capsules of poppy from the centre of which garlands are hanging.

110. pl. motif: *Magnolia* species; legend: a village scene; location: Sanchi stupa I, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. A *stupa* in the centre with a railing round it. On the left are five flowers of *Champa* with prominent gynophores and a *Kadamba* tree in flower. On the right are banana plants in front of which is a tree laden with mangoes and next to it is a tree of *Saptaparni* on which floral garlands are hanging.

111. pl. motif: *Magnolia* species, *Albizia lebbek*; legend: a scene from *Ruru Jataka*; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. The medallion depicts a scene from the *Ruru Jataka*. A merchant trying to commit suicide by drowning and *Bodhisattava* in the form of a golden deer, rescuing him. On the left of the medallion, six deer including their leader, the golden deer with prominent horns are sitting. In front of him is the King with two attendants. Behind him, the king is trying to shoot an arrow at the golden deer. In front, at the bottom of the medallion is a river and the golden deer is rescuing the merchant. Behind the group of deer are two trees of *Albizia lebbek* and behind the king is a flowering tree of *Champa*. Around the four corners of the medallion are four capsules of poppy, on two of them are standing figures.

112. pl. motif: *Magnolia grandiflora*; legend: *Vrikshaka*; location: Madhya Pradesh, c. 1st-2nd cent. A.D. A *vrikshaka* standing cross-legged under a flowering *Champa* tree. She is nude except for jewellery, particularly a heavy-jewelled waist girdle called *mekhala*. She is holding a branch of the tree with her right hand and her left hand is akimbo on her hip. She has a *tribhanga* stance of her body. The flowers have a prominent projecting gynophore but the number of petals are more than are found in nature, perhaps due to the sculptor's imagination.

113. pl. motif: *Magnolia grandiflora*; legend: a maid carrying toilet articles; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. Under a flowering tree of *Champa* a maid carrying a trayful of articles and in her left hand a pot probably containing a drink.

114. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Lady in the doorway; location: Lakshmana temple, c. 10th cent. A.D., Khajuraho. A nude lady heavily ornamented and holding a musical instrument *Vina*, is standing in the doorway on the lintel of which are festooned mango leaves.

115. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Parvati's penance; location: Sri Bhaktavatsalar temple, Tirukkalukkunram, T.N. Parvati is standing on one leg with matted hair under a tree of mangoes. She is standing amidst five fires, four are visible and the fifth is the Sun overhead.

116. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; a couple with a child; location: Virupaksha temple, Pattadkal, 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. A man and a woman with a child standing under a tree laden with mango fruit. From the jewellery worn by them, they appear to be a royal couple.

117. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: *Vrikshadhaka* form of embracing; location: Badami cave no. 4, 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. An amorous couple under a tree of mangoes.

118. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Ambika; location: cave no. 32, c. 8th-9th cent. A.D., Ellora, Maharashtra. Ambika, a Jain deity is sitting under a tree laden with the mango fruit and holding the hand of a naked child. Behind her is a male figure.

119. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: musicians; location: Harsa mata temple, Abaneri, 9th cent. A.D., Rajasthan. A man and a woman musician sitting on separate seats. The woman is playing a musical instrument, accompanied by four musicians. There are two bunches of mangoes in the background.

120. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Ambika; location: cave no. 4, Badami, 6th cent. A.D., Karnataka. Ambika standing under a fruit laden tree of mangoes. Her right hand holds a mango fruit which a child is trying to catch. Ambika's left hand is holding an object which is not clear. She is nude except for the heavy jewellery she is wearing.

121. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: *Yakshi*; location: Sanchi, 1st cent. B.C., M.P. A nude *Yakshi* holding the tree trunk with her right hand and a branch of the mango tree with her left hand. She is standing cross-legged and her body is arched.

122. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: a serpent and the tree; location: Sri Trimurti temple, Suchindram, T.N. A mango tree with fruit on it can be seen in the middle of the panel. It has a snake coiled at its base. Vishnu is standing near the tree with his right hand on his hip and the left holding the tree. His mount Garuda is sitting near the tree.

123. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Panchtantra story; location: Tirupaksa temple, Belgair. On the left is a mango tree on which a monkey is sitting and a crocodile is below in a river. On the right side of the panel, the crocodile is swimming away with the monkey on his back.

124. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: A Jain deity; location: Ellora, 8th cent. A.D., Maharashtra. A deity is sitting under a tree of mangoes, her right foot resting on a lotus pedestal. On either side are two male figures. Below her left leg is the mutilated figure of a lion. On her left thigh is the broken lower part of an image, very likely that of a child, in which case the image would be of Ambika. The mutilated figure of a lion points to the deity as Durga.

125. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Ganesha; location: at present Indian museum, Calcutta, c. 12th cent. A.D. A multi-armed figure of a dancing Ganesha standing on a lotus pedestal under a bunch of mangoes with leaves, at the upper end. Ganesha's trunk is touching the bowl of modakas held in the lower left hand. On either side are two figures playing musical instruments.

126. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: Revanta; location: Vidyavasini temple, Tumain, c. 8th cent. A.D., M.P. Revanta, the son of Surya, is riding a horse under a mango tree. There are flying *Gandharvas* offering floral garlands and people sitting or standing below. A man is holding an umbrella above his head.

127. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: a lady holding a mango fruit; location: Chennakeshwara temple, Belur, 12th cent. A.D. A heavily jewelled lady with an elaborate hair style is holding a fruit of mango which is beaked and is called *totapuri*, *ginimoothi* or *killimukhi* variety of mango.

128. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: worship of the tree; location: Ajatshatru pillar, Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A mango tree laden with fruit being worshipped. A stone platform below the tree has floral offerings lying on it. A male figure with two top-knots represents the Buddha.

129. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: worship of the tree; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. On the upper left side are three of the four kings of the four quarters, come to worship the Buddha, symbolically as the tree. The fourth king is worshipping the *Bodhi* tree which is surrounded by an ornate platform. Two

leaves of the *Ashvattha* tree are present above the head of the worshipping king. Three kings on elephants are on the lower left hand corner, a fourth figure is at the back. One king is standing in front of the mango tree and his elephant is in front of him.

130. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: worship of the *Bodhi* tree; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A mango tree with a railing round it and a stone platform below on which floral offerings are placed. Behind the tree is a male figure with two top knots representing Buddha. The tree is being worshipped among others by the four kings of the four quarters. In the centre of the panel is the triple ladder on which Buddha ascended the heavens. At the top and the lowermost step of the middle ladder are two *Dharam chakras*.
131. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: *Jetavana* scene from the *Jatakas*; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. On the right of the medallion, men are unloading a bullock cart full of gold pieces and arranging them on the ground. In the centre the merchant is making a libation to consecrate the gift. The presence of Buddha is indicated by the mango tree encircled by a railing.
132. pl. motif: *Mangifera indica*; legend: *Kalpavalli*; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A very realistic depiction of the mango fruit.
133. pl. motif: *Mesua ferrea*; legend: *Yakshini* Candra; location: Bharhut, M.P. A *Yakshini* is holding a flowering branch of *Naga Kesar* tree with her right hand and her left arm is embracing the tree trunk. A heavily jewelled figure, a pendant in the shape of a custard apple is hanging from her *ratnopavita*. A flower of *Naga Kesar* is in her hair plait near the shoulder and she is holding a branch of the *Naga Kesar* tree in her left hand. Her leg is around a flowering branch of the *Naga Kesar* tree.
134. pl. motif: *Mesua ferrea*; legend: A flowering *Naga Kesar* tree being worshipped; location: Sanchi, M.P. The tree has a stone platform under it. The 4-petalled flowers of *Naga Kesar* are clearly sculpted.
135. pl. motif: *Mimusops elengi*; legend: *Yaksha* Candramukha; location: Amaravati, c. 1st-2nd cent. B.C., at present Madras museum. A *stupa* like structure with five umbrellas denoting royalty are sculpted on top and a calligraphy in *pali* script below it. Under that is the head of *Yaksha* Candramukha on either side of which is a four-petalled motif. Above the *stupa* is a branch of the *Vakula* tree.
136. pl. motif: *Monstera deliciosa*; legend: Vishnu; location: Mandor, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, 11th cent. A.D. Vishnu standing in the centre with his hands on two male figures probably children. Behind Vishnu's shoulders on either side are two large leaves of *Monstera*. The figure on Vishnu's right is holding a fruit of *Monstera* on a plate in his left hand.
137. pl. motif: *Monstera deliciosa*; legend: a woman; location: Temple no. 1, Osian, 10th cent. A.D., Rajasthan. The thinly clad standing figure of a woman with very large ear-rings. Behind her head are three straight creeper like stalks of *Monstera* which end in large dissected leaves of *Monstera*.
138. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Airavateshwar temple, 12th cent. A.D., Darasuram, T.N. A banana plantation. On the lower panel holy men are meditating, sitting under the banana plants. The middle panel has holy men standing in various yogic postures. The upper panel has a royal figure with a child and attendants carrying fly whisks and umbrellas.
139. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. A banana plant with leaves and a bunch of bananas with a characteristic terminal bud.
140. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: Shakuntala and Dushyanta; location: Pattadkal, 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. Shakuntala, the adopted daughter of Kanwa meets her lover Dushyanta in the forest under a banana plant. The false unbranched stem of the banana plant and the large leaves with their unicostate venation are visible.

141. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: two couples; location: Swarga Brahma temple, Alampur, 8th cent. A.D., A.P. The couple on the right appear to be *sadhus*, the man with matted hair has his arm round the woman and she has her right hand around his shoulder. The man on the left of the panel appears to be a royal person. The woman under the banana tree is feeling shy with her waist cloth loose. She is holding the banana tree trunk with her left hand and her right hand is held by the man.

142. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: a wall panel; location: Avantipur, 9th cent. A.D. at present Kashmir museum, Srinagar, Kashmir. On the right is a banana plant with parallel venation of its leaves. On the left, banana leaves have got shredded.

143. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: a scene from *Gatha Saptasati*; location: Tewar, 10th cent. A.D., Jabalpur, M.P. On the left of the panel, two women are trying to persuade a woman to go to her lover. On the right a man is lying with legs crossed under a stylised banana tree and a women is caressing him.

144. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: Keshin *vadha*; location: Abaneri, early 9th cent. A.D., Rajasthan, at present Amber museum. A demon, Keshin attacking Krishna in the form of a horse. Krishna thrust his arm into Keshin's mouth and suffocated him to death. Krishna wearing a crown and a *Vaijayantimala*, thrusting his arm into Keshin's mouth while Balarama wearing peasant's clothes, looks on. The tree depicted behind the two brothers is a banana plant.

145. pl. motif: *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: a scene from the *Jatakas*. location: Bharhut, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A woman sitting with her work basket. There are two dogs, one carrying a pouch in his mouth. Two monkeys facing each other and below them another animal and two fish in the water below. Above the woman's head are two unidentified trees and behind her, a plant of banana complete with false stem, leaves and two bunches of banana fruit. Next to that is a bunch of mangoes with leaves.

146. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: decorative panel; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. A lotus plant with buds, half and fully opened flowers, seed bearing receptacle and leaves. Also visible is a curving rootstock with a node from which a bract like structure is protruding. On the lower left hand corner is a bird and a worm.

147. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Buddhist deity; location: at present Patna museum. A twelve-armed female Buddhist deity sitting on a lotus pedestal, holding in one hand a lotus flower. There is another lotus flower behind her left side, her foot rests on a lotus and above her on the right, stands a male deity on a lotus pedestal. Under the deity's seat, on the left of the panel are two female figures, one in a pose of meditation and the other praying. On the right side is a standing four-armed male figure holding an axe in one hand. Next to him on a stand is a water pot and then a large sized pot with an object on it.

148. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: *Purna-ghata*; location: Bharhut, 2nd c. B.C., M.P. Railing post fragment showing a highly ornate water-pot from which lotus stalks with leaves, buds and half-opened flowers are issuing. On the upper portion can be seen two geese, one with a half-opened flower bud in its beak, the other has a stylised flower bud in its beak.

149. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Lokanatha; location: Vishnupur, Gaya, 11th cent. A.D., Bihar, at present Patna museum. Lokanath, a Buddhist deity sitting on a pedestal holds in his left hand a stalk of an eight-petalled flower commonly called an eight-petalled lotus.

150. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: *Kamalmukhidevi*; location: Badami, c. 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. *Kamalmukhidevi* a naked form of Lakshmi as a goddess of fertility, has instead of a head, a fully opened lotus flower, and her hands hold half-opened lotus flowers.

151. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: *Seshasayi Vishnu*; location: Gupta temple, c. 6th cent. A.D., Deogarh. Vishnu is lying on his serpent couch *Sesha* and his consort Lakshmi is pressing his legs. From his navel a lotus stalk arises, with a fully opened lotus flower at its tip. The lotus stalk is broken in the

panel. Sitting on the lotus flower is the four-faced Brahma. On either side of him are gods and deities of the Hindu pantheon. On the lowermost row of the panel are five men and one woman, believed to be the five Pandava brothers and their wife Draupadi.

152. pl. motif: Lotus petals; legend: *Vedibandha*; location: Mt. Abu, 1288-96 A.D., Rajasthan. The *Vedibandha* has all round its base moulding, lotus petals giving the impression as if the temple is arising from the lotus.
153. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: *Purnaghata*; location: Amaravati, c. 100 A.D., Madras museum. A highly ornate pot from which stalks of lotus flowers, buds and leaves are arising. Lotus flowers are stylised. Arising from either side of the water pot are a fruit and a leaf of the *Kadamba*. They are also sculpted on either side of the *Kalash* as well as on the foot or the legs of the *Kalash*.
154. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Surya; location: Sun temple, Konarak, 13th cent. A.D., Orissa. Surya wearing high boots, ornate crown, *yajnopavita*, necklaces, also carries in his two hands, fully opened lotus flower. In the panel, the lotus flowers are present but the arms of Surya are broken from the elbows. He is standing on his chariot driven by his charioteer Aruna and harnessed by seven horses. On either side near the feet of the deity are attendant male figures, above them are two female figures.
155. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Lakshmi *abhisheka*; location: Nalanda. Lakshmi is sitting on a lotus pedestal holding a lotus flower stalk. Standing on lotus flowers are two elephants pouring water from water pots on Lakshmi.
156. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Lakshmi among the lotus plants; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. In the centre of the medallion is Lakshmi with a turban-like head dress, holding her hair plait with her left hand and her right hand rests on her hip, near which arises a stalk of lotus. Surrounding Lakshmi is the lotus root stock, leaves, buds and the seed bearing receptacle. Sitting below Lakshmi is a *Yakshi*. Outside the medallion at four corners is the lotus seed bearing receptacle with a striking resemblance to the poppy capsule.
157. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Tortoise and lotus stalk; location: Sanchi stupa II, M.P. At the base of the circular medallion is a tortoise from whose mouth are issuing lotus buds, flowers and leaves. Outside the rim of the medallion are lotus flowers.
158. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: Vishnu rescues the elephant; location: Gupta temple, 6th cent. A.D., Deogarh, M.P. Vishnu is astride his mount Garuda and below him in a lotus pond is standing an elephant with a full-blown lotus in his trunk. His legs are entangled in the coils of a serpent. The seven-hooded serpent has taken a human shape and is standing with his wife in a worshipful attitude.
159. pl. motif: *1000-petalled lotus*; legend: lotus ceiling; location: Mukha-mandapa, Udri, Shimoga; the lotus flower has been sculpted with many more petals than is found in nature.
160. pl. motif: *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: ceiling decoration; location: Pandrethan, Kashmir. At present Srinagar museum. The depiction of the flower is very natural showing the circle of stamens below the petals.
161. pl. motif: *5-petalled lotus*; legend: *Panca paramesthins*; location: Svetambara temple, Nadol.
162. pl. motif: *Nymphaea stellata* & lotus; legend: standing Maitreya; location: Guneri, 8th cent. A.D., Bihar. Maitreya wearing a *dhoti*, a jewelled crown, ornaments, is standing on a lotus pedestal with a male and a female as attendants and holding three stalks of the *Nilotpala* flowers in his left hand. The flower stalks are arising in the axil of a bract which in turn is present at a node of the stalk.
163. pl. motif: *Nymphaea stellata*, *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: decorative pillar; location: Mathura. A round medallion on a pillar with a lotus flower in the middle surrounded by a circle of *nilotpala* flowers and buds. The lotus flower is slightly stylised.

164. pl. motif: *Nymphaea stellata*, *Musa paradisiaca*; legend: a forest scene; location: Mallikarjuna temple, 7th cent. A.D. Pattadkal, Karnataka. Three women, two sitting and one standing. Three plants of bananas with large-sized leaves and unbranched false stem. The woman standing between two banana plants is holding a bunch of *Nymphaea* flower stalks. There is a *Nymphaea* plant, the orbicular leaves and the side view of flowers of which are well represented. The sculpture being in a monoplane gives the impression of the *Nymphaea* plant being a bush.

165. pl. motif: *Ocimum sanctum*; legend: *Tulasi* plant and the *mandap*; location: Gaya, Bihar; *Tulasi* plant growing in the *Tulasi mandap*. Two people standing on either side and worshipping the plant. Leaves of the plant are over-sized but their shape is of the *Tulasi* plant.

166. pl. motif: *Pandanus odoratissimus*; legend: a couple; location: Nagarjunakonda, 2nd cent. A.D., A.P. A couple is standing on a lion pillar in front of a *Ketaki* tree and holding hands. The elliptical leaves of *Pandanus* with their prominent midribs are visible.

167. pl. motif: *Pandanus odoratissimus*; legend: details of a *vedibandh*; location: Brahmeshvara temple, c. 1060 A.D., Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. Three near globular fruits of *Pandanus* with their spathes are sculpted on the *vedibandh*.

168. pl. motif: *Pandanus odoratissimus*; legend: *Vrikshaka*; location: Mathura museum, c. 2nd cent. A.D. A heavily jewelled naked woman is standing cross-legged on a dwarf under a tree of *Ketaki*. Visible are the inflorescences of *Ketaki* amidst a bunch of elliptical leaves with prominent midribs.

169. pl. motif: *Pandanus odoratissimus*; legend: *Vrikshaka*, location: at present Lucknow museum. A *vrikshaka* nude except for the jewellery she is wearing and with an elaborate hairstyle is standing under a *Ketaki* plant. Her heavily bangled right hand is holding a branch of the tree and her left hand seen by the angle of the arm appears to be resting on her hip. The panel is a broken piece, the position of the legs cannot be ascertained. There are two inflorescence of *Ketaki* under her right arm and one above her head on the left side. *Ketaki* leaves are very clear.

170. pl. motif: *Parkia biglandulosa*; legend: Elephant and the lotus; location: Sanchi stupa II. The medallion shows an elephant in front of a large-sized lotus bud. Behind the elephant is a stylised unidentified tree and in the background is a palm tree, *Parkia biglandulosa*. The large pinnate leaves are alternating with club-shaped inflorescence, a characteristic of this palm.

171. pl. motif: *Parkia roxburghii*; legend: a man and a woman; location: Amaravati, c. 150 A.D. *Parkia roxburghii* has curved leaflets and club-shaped inflorescence, both these characteristics are present in the panels of *Parkia*. A woman is holding one of the club-shaped inflorescences and a man with his left hand on his hip is standing in front of another plant.

172. pl. motif: *Phoenix dactylifera*; legend: Cakravartin; location: Nagarjunakonda c. 150 A.D., A.P. A *chaitya* is in the background. In the doorway a woman carrying a trayful of offerings, is standing. Outside the building, on the right side is the figure of Cakravartin. On the upper left is a tree of dates. The columnar tree trunk with diamond-shaped markings, large pinnate leaves and bunches of date fruits are visible.

173. pl. motif: *Phoenix dactylifera*, *Magnolia* species; legend: pastoral scene; location Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. A pastoral scene showing three buffaloes and two deer in front of a date palm. The columnar tree trunk with large pinnate leaves and two bunches of dates are visible. The diamond-shaped markings on the tree trunk are clear in the lower part of the tree trunk, the upper part shows more horizontal markings. Two parrots are pecking at the date fruits. On the upper left hand is a tree of *Magnolia*, full of flowers with prominent gynophores. Left of the *Magnolia* tree, are fern fronds with circinnate ptyxis.

174. pl. motif: *Piper betle*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Meenakshi temple, 17th cent. A.D., Madura, T.N. The undulating betel vine with three large, heart-shaped leaves are visible.

175. Pl. motif: *Piper betle*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Sri Lakshmi Narasimha temple, Namakkal, T.N. Two leaves of betel are sculpted, one above the other, forming a decorative design.

176. pl. motif: *Plumeria acuminata*; legend: Rishyasringa; location: Mathura, 2nd cent. B.C. Rishyasringa with a horn on his head is standing under a tree of *Champa*. The dichotomous branching and the long elliptical leaves and bunches of flowers are present.

177. pl. motif: *Polyalthia longifolia*; legend: *Yaksha*; location: at present Baroda museum, Gujarat. A *Yaksha* is standing on a pedestal under a tree of *Polyalthia*, with its pendulous branches.

178. pl. motif: *Un-identified*; legend: decorative panel; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. The pillar decoration shows a tree with leaves and fruit. At the base of the tree, two rabbits are eating the fruits.

179. pl. motif: *Punica granatum*; legend: Tara; location: Sarnath 5th cent. A.D. Tara, a Buddhist deity is holding a ripe pomegranate in her left hand. The fruit is slightly open on one side revealing the juicy arils of the seeds.

180. pl. motif: *Pyrus communis*; Heliodorus pillar; location: Besnagar, 2nd cent. B.C., Vidisha, M.P. The wreath-like decoration on the pillar shows in one of the swags of the wreath, a pear fruit along with a leaf.

181. pl. motif: *Raphanus sativus*; legend: Ganesha; location: Lakhisarai, 10th cent. A.D., Bihar, at present Patna museum. A four-armed Ganesha sitting on a seat in a temple niche holding a radish in his upper right hand and an axe in his upper left hand. His lower right hand is holding an *akshamala* and his lower left hand holds a bowl full of *modakas*, his elephant trunk dipping into them. Installed above Ganesha in a smaller niche is a *Siva-linga* on a double-petaled lotus.

182. pl. motif: *Ravenala madagascariensis*; legend: a frieze; location: Sri Hoysaleshvara temple, Halebid, c. 10th-11th cent. A.D., Karnataka. Upper panel has a row of mythical animals and the lowermost panel has a stylised floral motif, both panels being only decorative. In the middle panel two bearded men are worshipping a *Siva-linga*. On the right of it are three plants of *Ravenala* and people worshipping a *Siva-linga*. On the left is a woman dancer and people in a worshipful attitude. Flanked by two trees of *Ravenala*, two women holding pestles are pounding, probably grain in the mortar. The women are looking towards the left where a woman is sitting on a raised platform and a man carrying a bow is standing in a worshipful attitude.

183. pl. motif: *Rhodostachys pitcairniaefolia*, *Saccharum officinarum* legend: Rati; location: Ramappa temple, Palampet. Rati is standing cross-legged and holding a sugarcane plant in her left hand, the nodes and internodes of which are clear even though the leaves are absent. On the right the bracket has the sculpture of an aroid plant with large-sized spathes and the central appendix with flowers on it.

184. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; legend: Kamadeva; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. Kamadeva carrying a bow of sugarcane and five arrows is riding his mount, the parrot. Though the sugarcane bow is clear, but the flowers sculpted at the tip of the arrows cannot be identified.

185. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; legend: Manmatha with the sugarcane bow; location: Sri Alagarperumal temple, Tadikkombu, T.N. Six-armed, heavily jewelled Manmatha holds in his left hand a bow made of sugarcane and in his right hand a quiver with five arrows.

186. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; legend: Kamakshi amman; location: Kamakshi amman temple, Kanchipuram, T.N. Kamakshi amman sitting on a pedestal under an image of Kirtimukha, holding in her normal left hand a stalk of sugarcane. Articles of worship are lying before her.

187. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; legend: Kamadeva striking an arrow at Shiva; location: Airavateshwar temple, 12th cent. A.D., Darasuram, T.N. On the right side of the panel, Shiva is sitting on rocks,

meditating. His right arm is resting on the head of Nandi. Facing him is Kamadeva with his sugarcane bow, having shot an arrow at Shiva. Kamadeva lying dead can be seen on the left. On the extreme left is Parvati propitiating Shiva. Behind her are three women also propitiating him.

188. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Airavateshwar temple, 12th cent. A.D., Darasuram, T.N. Present is a plantation of sugarcane on the lower panel. The long dried leaves of sugarcane hang down and this is sculpted realistically. On the upper panel, a 4-armed deity stands in *anjali* pose. Also present are two rows of short, dwarf-like dancing figures.
189. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; legend: an old man holding a sugarcane plant; location: Sri Nellaiyappar temple, Tirunelveli, T.N. An old man wearing a *dhoti* and a turban is walking holding an axe in his right hand and a sugarcane plant in the left.
190. pl. motif: *Saccharum officinarum*; Kamadeva; location: *Kalyan mandapam*, Vellore, T.N. Kamadeva holding a sugarcane bow is dancing with two women on either side of him.
191. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: door jamb decoration; location: Mathura museum, c. 2nd cent. B.C. On the right side of the door jamb, the plant of *Ashoka* is sculpted as a decoration, but arising out of a pot with creeper like stem instead of straight like a tree. The leaves and flowers are realistic.
192. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: Kalpavriksha; location: at present Mathura museum. One of the five wish-fulfilling trees is depicted as a column.
193. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: Sita in the *ashokavana*; location: Bhind, M.P. 5th cent. A.D. A scene from *Ramayana*, Sita sitting under a tree of *Ashoka*.
194. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: *Vrikshaka*; location: Vrindavana, c. 1st cent. B.C., U.P. A semi-nude woman wearing heavy jewellery and *Mekhala*, a jewelled waist girdle, standing under a flowering tree of *Ashoka*, holding a flowering branch of the tree with her right hand and her left hand is besides her.
195. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: *Vrikshaka*; location: Jankhat, c. 2nd cent. B.C., U.P. A woman standing cross-legged in a *tribhanga* pose under a tree of *Ashoka*. She is nude except for a waist cloth the tassels of which are on the right of the figure. She is wearing heavy anklets, bangles, necklace. Her right hand is holding a branch of the flowering tree, her left hand rests on her hip.
196. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: mother and child; location: Mathura, c. 1st cent. A.D. A mother is holding a child in her arms and is standing under a tree of *Ashoka*. The figure is broken but from the angle of her stance it appears to be the *tribhanga* pose. Her right hand is holding a branch of the tree and left hand a child. She has an elaborate hair style decorated with flowers.
197. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: a woman under the tree; location: Mathura museum, c. 1st cent. A.D. A woman holding a bunch of flowers is standing under a tree of *Ashoka* with her back resting against the tree trunk and her legs bending at the knees.
198. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: Chola koka devata; location: Bharhut, 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A heavily jewelled, semi-nude woman standing on an elephant under a flowering tree of *Ashoka*. With her right hand she is holding a flowering branch and her left arm and leg are around the tree trunk.
199. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: birth of Siddhartha Gautama; location: Nalanda, 11th-12th cent. A.D., Bihar. Mayadevi is holding a branch of the *Ashoka* tree and Siddhartha is born from her right side. Young Siddhartha is also seen standing on the right side of Mayadevi on five pedestals of lotus one on top of the other. Gods and deities are in attendance.
200. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: birth of Siddhartha; location: Nagarjunakonda, 2nd cent. A.D., A.P. Mayadevi is standing cross-legged in a *tribhanga* style under the tree of *Ashoka* and is holding a branch of the tree with her right hand and her left hand is resting on her left hip. She is accompanied by female

attendants. Siddhartha on being born, took seven steps and these can be seen on the cloth held by four men, the kings of the four quarters.

201. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: worship of the Ashoka tree, *Bodhi* tree of Vipaswi; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A tree of *Ashoka* with bunches of flowers and leaves under which a stone platform is present on which floral offerings are placed. Two men are kneeling near the platform and the others are standing in a worshipful attitude and some are holding offerings of floral garlands. Outside the circle of the medallion are two fruits with two leaves each of *Annona squamosa*.
202. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*; legend: *Matrika*; location: Samalaji, 5th cent. A.D., Gujarat. The *matrika* is holding a child in her arms, resting on her hips. Hanging from her coiffure is a bunch of fruits of *Ashoka*. On the other side of her head is a bunch of *Ashoka* flowers but badly mutilated.
203. pl. motif: *Saraca asoca*, *Nymphaea stellata*; legend: Man and child; location: Mandasaur, M.P. A man accompanied by a child is standing in a niche from the lintel of which hang a bunch of *Ashoka* flowers on the right and a bunch of *Ashoka* fruits on the left. The man is holding a flower of *Nymphaea* in his right hand. In the second half of the plate, a woman accompanied by a child is standing in a niche on a stylised animal. She is holding a *Nymphaea* flower in her left hand. On the right and the left corners of the lintel are hanging a bunch of *Ashoka* flowers and a bunch of *Ashoka* fruits, respectively.
204. pl. motif: *Shorea robusta*; legend: Buddha's coffin; location: Gandhara, c. 3rd cent. A.D. Buddha's coffin is lying between two trees of *Sala*. The trees are stylised. His coffin is being guarded by people of the Malla tribe. On the left of the coffin, Ananda is standing mourning the death of Gautam Buddha.
205. pl. motif: *Shorea robusta*; legend: Relief showing the *parinirvana* of Buddha; location: Mathura museum, c. 1st cent. A.D. Body of Buddha is lying under the *Sala* tree. A *yakshi* or a tree spirit is standing between the branches of the tree. Mallas who looked after his dead body are standing behind the bier. Standing near the coffin is the chief mourner, Ananda.
206. pl. motif: *Shorea robusta*; legend: worship of the *Sala* tree, *Bodhi* tree of Viswabahu; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent B.C., M.P. A flowering tree of *Sala* under which a stone platform is present. At the base of the tree trunk, a *Dharma chakra* representing Buddha, is sculpted. Two men are kneeling at the base of the tree with their foreheads touching the platform. A woman is standing on the left side of the tree holding a floral garland and a man on the right side of the tree holding a bowl containing flowers. With his right hand he is throwing flowers on the platform.
207. pl. motif: *Shorea robusta*; legend: *Salabhanjika*; location: Kosalashvara temple, c. 8th cent. A.D., Baidyanath, Orissa. A *Salabhanjika* standing under the *Sala* tree holding a branch of the tree with her left hand and her left leg around the tree trunk. She is standing under a dome, the lower side of which is sculpted.
208. pl. motif: *Solanum melongena*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Nataraja temple, Chidambaram, T.N. A solitary fruit of brinjal is sculpted on the pillar. It has a round fruit body, persistent calyx and a curved stalk.
209. pl. motif: *Solanum melongena*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. Four brinjal fruits and leaves with clear midribs are visible.
210. pl. motif: *Spathodea campanulata*; legend: a forest scene; location: Sanchi, c. 1st cent. B.C., M.P. A tree of *Spathodea* is visible with its branches, flowers with curved swollen buds at the top. On the left are two out-sized stylised bulls with a man astride on each of them. On the right side of the tree is an elephant with his young one.
211. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Jambukeshwar temple, 17th cent. A.D., Tiruchirapalli, T.N. *Jambu*, the *sthala vriksha* of the temple is sculpted as a pillar decoration. The round fruits and elliptical leaves are visible.

212. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: A hunter worshipping a *Siva-linga*; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. A hunter carrying a bow and wearing a crown is standing under a *Jambu* tree and offering a lotus flower to the *Siva-linga* present under the tree.

213. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: worship of the *Siva-linga*; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. A *Siva-linga* present under the tree of *Jambu* and a worshipper offering flowers.

214. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: *abhisheka* of *Siva-linga*; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. An elephant pouring water on the *Jambu* tree with his trunk.

215. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: *Siva-linga* under the tree; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. A *Siva-linga* under the tree of *Jambu* with its large sized leaves and a solitary flower at the apex. Above the *Siva-linga* a spider has woven a web.

216. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: Shiva Bhairava as a dog; location: Jambukeshwar temple, Tiruchirapalli, T.N. Shiva Bhairava depicted as an open-mouthed dog in place of the *Siva-linga*, sitting under the *Jambu* tree.

217. pl. motif: *Syzygium cumini*; legend: Lakshmi offering *Bilvapatra* to the *Siva-linga* installed under a tree of *Jambu*. Four-armed Lakshmi holding lotus buds in two of her hands is offering *Bilva* leaves with the lower right hand to the *Siva-linga* which has a floral garland on it.

218. pl. motif: *Terminalia arjuna*; legend: *Yamalarjuna* trees; location: Madhukeshvara temple, 8th cent. A.D., Mukhalingam, A.P. Krishna is standing holding on either side two trees of *Yamalarjuna*. The trees are highly stylised. The faces of Mangriva and Nala-Kubera are visible on top of the trees with a bunch of leaves on their head.

219. pl. motif: *Vitis vinifera*; legend: a woman carrying a pot of wine; location: Mathura, 2nd cent. A.D. A woman standing under a window on a dwarf, holding a bunch of grapes in her right hand and a glass covering the wine pot in the left. A couple is standing in the window above and the man is trying to take the glass off the wine pot.

220. pl. motif: *Vitis vinifera*, *Nelumbo nucifera*; legend: crossbar medallion; location: Bharhut, M.P. A lotus flower present in the centre of the medallion with petals on the periphery and a circular row of lines depicting the stamens. Seeds are present in the centre of the flower. Surrounding the lotus is an undulating grape vine with leaves and bunches of grapes.

221. pl. motif: *Vitis vinifera*; legend: A foreigner; location: Bharhut, c. 2nd cent. B.C., M.P. A king or a warrior standing holding in his left hand a sword and in his right hand a twig of the grape vine with a single leaf and a bunch of grapes. He is wearing a full sleeved jacket, a scarf and a cap like head gear.

222. pl. motif: *Vitis vinifera*, *Helianthus annuus*, *Mangifera indica*, *Anthocephalus cadamba*; legend: pastoral scene; location: Sanchi, M.P. Lower left corner of the panel has a tree of *Kadamba* with globular inflorescence above which is a tree of mangoes with fruits hanging in a bunch. At the bottom of the panel are three buffaloes, also present are three parrots with prominent hook-shaped beaks. On the extreme left are three capitula of Sunflower.

223. pl. motif: *Zea mays*; legend: Nayika; location: Nuggehalli, Karnataka. The Nayika, heavily jewelled is holding in her left hand a corn cob.

224. pl. motif: *Zizyphus mauritiana*; legend: Nara-Narayana; location: Gupta temple, 6th cent. A.D., Deogarh, M.P. Nara and Narayana are meditating under a tree of *Badari* in *Badarikashram*. *Badari* leaves are alternate and not opposite as shown in this panel. The shape of the leaves appear as if they have been sculpted at an angle. Brahma sitting on a *padmasana* at the top is flanked by flying *Gandharvas* and *apsaras*. A lion and a deer are sitting under the seat of the *rishis*. Brahma is giving blessings to those below.

225. pl. motif: *Zizyphus mauritiana*; legend: scene from the *Ramayana*; location: Ketpanarayana Devasthan, Bhatkal, Karnataka. Rama under the *Badari* tree and Hanuman standing before him. Lakshmana struck by Meghanada with the *Nagastra* lies unconscious. Garuda, the mount of Vishnu was invoked and on his arrival, the *naga* disappeared. Garuda is seen on the right side of the panel.

226. pl. motif: *Zizyphus mauritiana*. legend: a scene from the *Jatakas*. location: Bharhut, M.P. Two trees of *Badari* on the right with a monkey sitting on one of them. Two pilgrims, one carrying a *Bahangi* and giving food to the monkey on the tree. A second monkey is sitting on the ground.

227. pl. motif: unidentified tree; legend: *vanadevata*; location: Bharhut, M.P. A *vanadevata* is offering food and drink to a man who is ready to receive them. Though the *vanadevata* is not visible, two arms protruding from the tree are visible, one carrying a vessel with food and the other holding a kettle presumably with a drink.

228. pl. motif: *four-petalled flowers*; legend: decorative panel; location: Kaitabhaneshwar temple, Kubethur. The large sized 4-petalled flowers have small sepals alternating with the petals.

229. pl. motif: *Five-petalled flowers*; legend: Surya with attendants; location: Yogeshwar temple, Yogeshwar, Almora, U.P. Surya Deva is standing in the middle with attendants on either side. All three are wearing high boots and Surya is also wearing a full length dress and an ornate cap. He carries a bunch of 5-petalled flowers in both hands instead of the characteristic lotus flowers. On the back of the stele is lotus type sculpture.

230. pl. motif: *6-petalled flowers*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Mata Osian temple, 10th cent. A.D., Rajasthan. An unidentified 6-petalled flower which has six small alternately arranged sepals.

231. pl. motif: *6-petalled flower*; legend: Lakshmi; location: at present Mathura museum. Lakshmi sitting on a chair is holding in her right hand a fully opened 6-petalled flower. She is wearing traditional jewellery worn by Indian women.

232. pl. motif: *7-petalled flower*; legend: an unidentified figure; location: Chanchola in Basohli, Jammu, J.&K. A woman wearing a dress with a knee-length skirt, her hands folded in *anjali*, two 7-petalled flowers sculpted at the upper end of the panel.

233. pl. motif: *8-petalled flower*; legend: pillar decoration; location: Nortnawalai Kodemberkal, Puddukottai, T.N.

234. pl. motif: *stylised plant* arising out of a pot; legend: *Bodhisattva* Lokeshwara; location: at present Ashutosh museum, Calcutta. *Bodhisattva* is standing on a lotus pedestal and holding the stalks of an 8-petalled flower in his left hand. Between two 4-petalled flowers of the plant is an 8-petalled flower resembling the *Dharma chakra*. A *Yaksha* is holding the plant at its base on the right and on the left are three figures, one of them appears to be Garuda.

235. pl. motif: *4-petalled flowers*; legend: a window screen; location: Durga temple, Aihole, 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. A window screen made of 4-petalled flowers. A figure present on top of the window screen.

236. pl. motif: *4-petalled flower*; legend: ceiling of a *mandap*; location: Jain temple Aihole, 7th cent. A.D., Karnataka. The unidentified flowers alternate with Swastika motifs.

237. pl. motif: *Kalpavriksha*; legend: *Kamadhenu*; location: Sri Tonrattunamatka temple, Tiruppapuliyair, T.N. *Kamadhenu* standing under the *Kalpavriksha*. Both are mythical.

238. pl. motif: *stylised creeper* with a floral bud; legend: *Salabhanjika*; location: Sri Seizamesvaran temple, Bhavani, T.N.

239. pl. motif: *Stylised plant*; legend: *Salabhanjika*; location: Airavateshvara temple, 1146-73 A.D., Darasuram, T.N.

In plates 238 and 239, the floral motif is a stylised plant with a woman standing under it and holding the stalk of the plant.

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## Glossary

Abhaya mudra	: a hand gesture, do not fear.
Abhisheka	: Consecration.
Acarya, Acharya	: head of a group of monks.
Agastya	: a rishi.
Agni	: fire; God of fire.
Aguru	: incense.
Ahalya	: wife of rishi Gautama.
Airavata	: the white elephant of Indra, churned during amritamanthan.
Aiswarya	: divine powers.
Akshaya navami	: 9th day of the month of Katrika.
Akshmala	: rosary of Rudraksha beads.
Amalaka	: temple shikhar modelled on the fluted seed of <i>Emblica officinalis</i> Schum.
Amalaka, Amalaki	: <i>Emblica officinalis</i> Schum.
Amaltas	: tree, <i>Cassia fistula</i> Linn.
Ambika	: a Jaina deity, also a name of Durga.
Amrita	: nectar, drink of immortality.
Amritamanthan	: churning the ocean of milk to extract amrita.
Ananda	: the favourite disciple of Gautama Buddha.
Ananta	: Endless, a celestial serpent.
Anantasayin	: epithet of Vishnu, one who sleeps on the endless coils of the serpent Ananta.
Andhakasura	: a blind <i>asura</i> given in adoption to Hiranyaksha by Shiva.
Anjali hasta	: hands joined together in an act of worship.
Ankush	: elephant goad.
Apsara	: celestial dancer.
Ardhanarishwara	: half male and half female image.
Ardhaparanika	: half flag hand gesture.
Arghya	: ritual offering.
Arka, Arucu	: <i>Calotropis gigantea</i> T.Br.ex. Ait.
Arhat	: Tirthankar of Jainas.
Ashtabhujswami	: Vishnu, Lord with eight arms.
Ashtanidhi	: 8 precious articles.

Ashoka	: a tree, <i>Saraca asoca</i> (Roxb.) De Wilde.
Ashvattha	: a tree, <i>Ficus religiosa</i> Linn. ( <i>Bodhi</i> tree of Gautama Buddha).
Asuras	: gods of pre- <i>vedic</i> age, sons of Diti and Kashyapa, later became evil beings.
Atala	: one of the seven worlds of Hindu mythology.
Atma	: soul.
Atti	: <i>Udumbara</i> tree, <i>Ficus glomerata</i> Roxb.
Avatar	: Incarnation.
Bahangi	: large-sized scales.
Bahupada	: one with many feet, a name of the Banyan tree because of its hanging roots.
Bal	: strength.
Balakhilya rishis	: 60,000 thumb-sized <i>rishis</i> .
Balarama	: elder brother of Krishna.
Balaswami	: Skanda as a child.
Bali	: sacrifice; Elder brother of Sugriva.
Bamboo	: <i>Bambusa</i> species.
Bhadrakali	: goddess Kali.
Bhavan	: a building.
Bhog	: ritual offerings made to god.
Bhu	: earth; goddess Earth, wife of Vishnu.
Bhumisparsmudra	: invoking the earth as a witness.
Bhuta	: evil spirit.
Bhutala	: one of the seven worlds in Hindu mythology.
Bhutagni	: fire that destroys evil.
Bijapura	: full of seeds, a name of <i>Citrus medica</i> linn. & <i>Citrus Limon</i> (Lemon) Burm. f.
Bodhi tree	: tree of enlightenment.
Bodhisattva	: Buddha in the making.
Brahma	: Hindu god of Creation.
Brahman	: belonging to the priestly caste, first among the 4 castes of Hindus, embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment.
Brahmacari, Brahmacarin.	: Bachelor, epithet of Skanda.
Buddhi	: Wisdom, Enlightenment.
Caityavrikshas	: a sacred tree with a platform under it.
Caritra	: right conduct.
Chakra	: Discus, emblem of Vishnu.

Chakravartin	: conqueror of the universe.
Champa	: common name of many plants, e.g., <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> , <i>Michelia champaca</i> , <i>Plumeria acuminata</i> .
Chamunda	: Durga for killing demons Cunda and Munda.
Chandal	: outcaste.
Chandra	: Moon.
Chopet, Chopar, Chausar	: a dice game.
Chowrie	: fly whisk.
Chuta	: mango, <i>Mangifera indica</i> Linn.
Cunda, Chunda	: a demon killed by Durga.
Daksha	: a rishi, father of Sati.
Dakshin	: southern direction.
Dakshina	: offerings made to a guru.
Dakshinamurti	: Shiva sitting facing south.
Danda	: stick.
Darbha ghas	: <i>Desmostachya bipinnata</i> Beauv, <i>Imperata cylindrica</i> Beauv. and <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> Pers.
Darshana	: right faith; vision of a deity.
Deva	: a celestial being.
Devala	: a <i>rishi</i> , cursed Huhu to become a crocodile.
Deva-kanika	: <i>apsara</i> .
Deva-years	: celestial years.
Devasena	: army of celestials personified as a wife of Skanda-Karttikeya.
Dham	: Four places of important pilgrimage for Hindus.
Dharma-cakra	: wheel of Law propounded by the Buddha.
Dhatri, Dhatrica	: Earth, the nursing mother, also a tree, <i>Emblica officinalis</i> Schum.
Dhoti	: a loose lower garment wrapped round the waist by men in India.
Dhyanmudra	: meditation pose.
Dhvaja	: banner.
Dohada	: pregnancy longing.
Dushyanta	: a King, married Shakuntala
Dvarapala	: door keeper.
Ekadashi	: eleventh day of the month.
Ekanamsa	: sister of Balarama and Krishna, married Arjuna.

Erapatra	: a Naga King.
Gada	: mace or a club, emblem of Vishnu.
Gana	: Shiva's entourage.
Gandharva	: celestial musician
Ganesha	: elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati, god of wisdom and remover of obstacles.
Gangeya	: name of Bhishma and Karttikeya, both considered as sons of Ganga.
Garbha griha	: sanctum sanctorum of a Hindu temple.
Garuda	: mythical half bird, half man mount of Vishnu; son of Vinata, grandson of Daksha.
Gayatrena	: <i>Gayatri mantra</i> , invocation of Surya, the Sun-god.
Gharma	: a pot kept boiling at a temperature exactly the nature of human body.
Godhika	: lizard.
Gopi	: wife of a <i>gopa</i> .
Gopuram	: a temple gate.
Guru	: teacher.
Hanuman	: son of Pavana by Anjana, assisted Ramachandra in his search for Sita, A devotee of Rama.
Hari	: Vishnu.
Hariti	: wife of Panchika, turned Buddhist at the behest of Buddha.
Hawan	: Yajna, a fire sacrifice.
Huhu	: a <i>gandharva</i> king cursed by <i>rishi</i> Devala to become a crocodile.
Indra	: god of the firmament, rain, thunder and lightning.
Indradhvaja	: banner of Indra.
Indramaha	: festival honouring Indra.
Indrani	: wife of Indra.
Indrayumna	: a Pandyan king cursed to become a crocodile by <i>rishi</i> Agastya.
Jagam	: fire sacrifice.
Jalasayin	: an epithet of Vishnu on his serpent couch floating on the waters during the submersion of the world.
Jasmine	: a flowering bush, <i>Jasminum sambac</i> (Linn.) Ait.
Jata bhara	: hair piled in a bun on top of the head.
Jata Vedas Agni	: fire in the body.
Jatayu	: son of Garuda, fought with Ravana to save Sita from being abducted by Ravana.
Jiva	: soul.

Jnana	: knowledge.
Jnana indriyas	: 5 senses: sight, smell, touch, taste, hearing.
Jyestha devi	: elder sister of Lakshmi.
Kachnar	: a tree, <i>Bauhinia variegata</i> Linn.
Kadamba	: a tree <i>Anthocephalus cadamba</i> Miq.
Kalash	: water pot.
Kali	: Durga as a destroyer of evil.
Kaliya	: a serpent king living in river Yamuna.
Kaliya daman	: subduing of Kaliya.
Kalpadruma, Kalpavriksha	: wish-fulfilling tree.
Kalpalata, Kalpavalli	: wish-fulfilling creeper.
Kama	: lust, love.
Kamadeva	: god of love.
Kamadhenu	: wish-fulfilling cow.
Kamalaksha	: son of Taraka.
Kamakshi	: Parvati of beautiful eyes.
Kamalmukhi devi	: Lakshmi with a fully opened lotus flower replacing the head.
Kama-Mohini	: seductress.
Kamandala	: ascetic's water pot.
Kamrak	: a tree, <i>Averrhoa carambola</i> Linn.
Kanakmuni	: a <i>rishi</i> , a Bodhisattva.
Kansa	: maternal uncle of Krishna.
Kanwa	: a <i>rishi</i> , adopted Shakuntala.
Kapittha	: a tree, <i>Feronia elephantum</i> Correa.
Kari-varada	: Vishnu in his playful aspect.
Karttikeya	: son of Shiva and Parvati.
Kashya muni	: a <i>vedic</i> sage.
Kaumari	: female energy of Kumara.
Kesin, Keshin	: a demon took the form of a horse, attacked Krishna but was killed by Krishna.
Ketaki	: a tree, <i>Pandanus odoratissimus</i> Linn. f.
Kirti	: fame, wife of Vamana Hari.
Kirtimukha	: a lion-headed monster produced by Shiva; deprived of food, fed on his own flesh, till only his face remained; a gargoyle.
Krakuchchanda	: a Bodhisattva.

Krishna	:	eighth incarnation of Vishnu.
Ksiva	:	drunk.
Kubera	:	god of wealth; chief of <i>yakshas, rakshasas, guhyakas</i> .
Kurma	:	Tortoise.
Kurma avatar	:	Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu.
Lakshmana	:	Younger brother of Ramachandra.
Lakshmi	:	wife of Vishnu, goddess of beauty and prosperity.
Linga, Lingam	:	Phallic symbol of Shiva.
Linga Puja	:	worship of the <i>linga</i> .
Mahamaya	:	mother of Siddhartha Gautama.
Malyavan	:	a devotee of Shiva, cursed by Pushpadanta to become a spider.
Mandal	:	a magical circle.
Mandapam	:	a platform for performing rituals.
Mandar	:	a tree, <i>Erythrina variegata</i> Linn.
Manes	:	ancestral souls.
Mango	:	a fruit of <i>Mangifera indica</i> Linn.
Mangriva	:	son of Kubera.
Manmatha	:	Kamadeva, Hindu god of love.
Mantra, Mantram	:	a sacred hymn.
Manvantara	:	an epoch.
Mariamma	:	a form of Durga.
Maricha	:	a <i>rakshasa</i> , uncle of Ravana, could assume any form he wished to.
Matrika	:	a mother goddess.
Matulam	:	Pomegranate, a fruit of <i>Punica granatum</i> Linn.
Matulunga	:	a citrus fruit.
Mayadevi	:	mother of Siddhartha Gautama.
Mekhala	:	jewelled waist girdle.
Mena	:	mother of Parvati.
Mithuna	:	amorous couple.
Modaka	:	sweet rice balls, favourite food of Ganesha.
Mridanga	:	a type of a musical drum.
Mucchalinda.	:	5-headed cobra, protected Buddha from a storm.
Mudra	:	hand gesture.
Mulaka	:	radish, a root of <i>Raphanus sativa</i> Linn.

Mulakakanda	: radish, a bulbous root.
Munda	: a demon killed by Durga (Chamunda)
Munja ghas	: a grass, <i>Erianthus munja</i> Jesw.
Murti	: Icon meant for worship.
Murugan	: south Indian name of Skanda, son of Shiva.
Musala	: a pestle.
Nabhi-Kamal	: a lotus arising from Vishnu's navel.
Naga	: a serpent; a tribe.
Naga devata	: a serpent deity.
Naga Kesar	: a tree, <i>Mesua ferrea</i> Linn.
Naga-lingam	: a tree, <i>Couroupita guianensis</i> Aubl.
Nagastra	: a serpent weapon.
Nagavalli	: Betel vine, <i>Piper betle</i> Linn.
Nakshatras	: constellations.
Nala-Kubera	: son of Kubera.
Naman	: to recite.
Namaskar	: a form of greetings.
Nandi, Nandin	: Shiva's vahana, a bull.
Nara	: a god or <i>rishi</i> connected with Narayana with whom Arjuna is identified, born to Dharam and Murti.
Narada muni	: a <i>rishi</i> .
Narayana	: an appellation of Vishnu, the original first man, so called because Nara (waters) were his first place of motion; born to Dharam and Murti.
Neel Kamal, Nilotpala	: blue water lily, <i>Nymphaea stellata</i> Willd.
Nipa	: a tree, <i>Anthocephalus cadamba</i> Miq.
Nirvana	: salvation.
Nitala	: one of the 7 worlds of Hindu mythology.
Nyagrodha	: a tree, <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Linn.
OM	: Supreme Soul.
Om Namah Shivaya	: greetings to Shiva.
Padma	: lotus, <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.
Padmahasta, Padmapani	: lotus in hand.
Padmakshi	: lotus eyed.
Padmalaya	: lotus pond.

Padmamalini	:	decked with lotus garlands.
Padmasambhava	:	lotus born.
Padmasana	:	lotus seat.
Padmavarna	:	lotus coloured.
Padma-uru	:	lotus thighed.
Padmesthita	:	standing on a lotus.
Padmini, Pushkarini	:	abounding in lotuses.
Panchika	:	husband of Hariti.
Panch Paramesthins	:	five Supreme ones in Jainism.
Panch Samskaram	:	five sacraments.
Paranic	:	life force, with reference to the soul.
Parashu	:	axe.
Parashurama	:	Rama with the axe; a part incarnation of Vishnu.
Parinirvana	:	final salvation.
Parvat	:	mountain, father of Parvati.
Parvati	:	wife of Shiva.
Patala	:	the nether world, one of the 7 worlds of Hindu mythology.
Patali	:	a tree, <i>Stereospermum suaveolens</i> DC.
Pisachas	:	blood sucking evil spirits.
Plaksha	:	a tree, <i>Butea monosperma</i> (Lam.) Kuntze.
Plantain	:	banana plant, <i>Musa paradisiaca</i> Linn.
Pramathas	:	Shiva's Ganas.
Prithvi	:	Earth, personified as a goddess, wife of Vishnu.
Poppy	:	a plant, <i>Papaver somniferum</i> Linn.
Puja	:	worship.
Pundarika	:	white lotus, <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.
Purnacandrakriti	:	Vishnu in his moon form.
Purna-ghata, Purna-Kumbh	:	vase of plenty.
Pushkar	:	a lotus pond.
Pushkarparna	:	a lotus leaf.
Pushkarini	:	abounding in lotus.
Pushpadanta	:	a devotee of Shiva, cursed by Malyavan to become a spider.
Pustak	:	book.
Rajanya	:	one belonging to the ruling caste.

Rakshas	: evil being.
Ramachandra	: eldest son of king Dashratha, seventh incarnation of Vishnu.
Rasatala	: one of the 7 worlds of Hindu mythology.
Rati	: Desire, personified as wife of Kamadeva.
Ravana	: King of Lanka, abducted Sita, was killed by Ramachandra.
Revanta	: son of Surya and Samjna.
Rishi	: a sage.
Rishi-patni	: wife of a <i>rishi</i> .
Rishyashringa	: son of <i>rishi</i> Vibhandaka, born with a horn on his head.
Rose apple	: a tree, <i>Syzygium jambos</i> (Linn.) Alston.
Rudra	: <i>Vedic</i> name of Shiva.
Rudraksha	: beads of <i>Elaeocarpus sphaericus</i> (Gaertn.).
Rukkha-chaitya	: abode of tree spirits.
Rukkha-devata	: tree spirit.
Rukkha-Maha	: festival of trees and tree spirits.
Sadhu	: a holy man.
Salabhanjika	: a girl who breaks the flowers of the Sala tree, <i>Shorea robusta</i> , Gaertn. f.
Salmali	: red silk cotton tree, <i>Bombax ceiba</i> Linn.
Samadhi	: a state of deep meditation.
Sanantakumar	: a mind born son of Brahma.
Sankarshana	: Balarama.
Sapta	: number seven.
Saptaparni	: a tree, <i>Alstonia scholaris</i> R.Br.
Saptatala	: 7 trees of Tala in a row.
Saraswati	: goddess of learning and music, wife of Brahma.
Sarira	: body.
Sati	: daughter of Daksha, wife of Shiva.
Sattee	: to immolate oneself.
Satyavan	: a prince, married Savitri
Satyavrata	: a king, exiled by his father was raised to heaven in his mortal body.
Saubhari	: a <i>rishi</i> .
Sausage tree	: <i>Kigelia africana</i> (pinnata) DC.
Savitri	: daughter of king Ashwapati, married Satyavan.
Senani	: Murugan (Skanda), General of the celestial army.

Senapati	: Murugan (Skanda), General of the celestial army.
Sesasaynamurti	: Vishnu, sleeping on the coils of serpent Sesha.
Shaiva, Saiva	: pertaining to Shiva, devotee of Shiva.
Shakti	: energy, power.
Shakti-pithas	: place of pilgrimage where dismembered pieces of Sati's body fell.
Shakuntala	: adopted daughter of Kanwa, married Dushyanta.
Shala. Sala	: a tree, <i>Shorea robusta</i> Gaertn. f.
Shanmukha	: many-faced Skanda.
Shikhar	: pinnacle, the top.
Shimshapa	: a tree, <i>Dalbergia sissoo</i> Roxb.
Shiva, Siva	: destroyer in the Hindu trinity of gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva.
Shivaratri	: the night Shiva manifested himself in the linga form.
Shri, Shree	: Lakshmi, wife of Vishnu, goddess of fortune.
Sirisha	: a tree, <i>Albizia lebbek</i> Benth.
Sita	: wife of Ramachandra, abducted by Ravana.
Sitaphal	: fruit of <i>Annona squamosa</i> Linn.
Sivakamiyamma	: beloved of Shiva.
Skanda	: son of Shiva and Parvati (Murugan, Kumar, Karttikeya, Subrahmanya).
Soma	: a drink made from herbs during the <i>Vedic</i> period.
Stambha	: pillar.
Sthalavriksha	: a sacred tree belonging to a specific temple.
Sthanu	: fixed, unmoving, like a pillar; Shiva.
Sthanubhuta	: one whose essence is a pillar.
Sthanu-Vata	: Vata tree, <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Linn.
Stupa	: a Buddhist place of worship, where the ashes of the Buddha are buried.
Subrahmanya	: son of Shiva and Parvati, same as Murugan.
Sugriva	: a tribal chief, helped Ramachandra in the war against Ravana to rescue Sita.
Sunda	: an asura General of Andhakasura's army.
Supratika	: cursed by his brother Vibhavasu to become an elephant.
Surapadma	: a demon killed by Murugan.
Surpanakha	: sister of Ravana.
Surya	: Sun-God.
Sutala	: one of the 7 worlds of Hindu mythology.
Tala	: a palm tree, <i>Borassus flabellifer</i> Linn.

Taladhvaja	:	Palm banner of Balarama.
Talavana	:	forest of Tala trees.
Tandava	:	Shiva's dance of destruction.
Tapas, Tapam	:	penance.
Tara	:	a Buddhist deity.
Taraka	:	an asura killed by Skanda.
Tarakaksha	:	son of Taraka.
Thali	:	a flat plate.
Tirtha,Teertham	:	a place of pilgrimage.
Tirthankara	:	Jain saint.
Travellers's palm	:	a plant; <i>Ravenala madagascairns</i> Sonn.
Tribhang	:	three-fold stance of the body.
Trishanku	:	Satyavrata for being suspended in air.
Trishula	:	trident of Shiva.
Trisikha	:	three-peaked.
Tulasi	:	holy basil, <i>Ocimum sanctum</i> Linn.
Uddhar	:	salvation.
Udumvara, Udumbara.	:	a tree, <i>Ficus glomerata</i> Roxb.
Upadhyaya	:	Jain monk who teaches the scriptures.
Urvashi	:	an apsara.
Vadari, Badari	:	a tree, <i>Zizyphus mauritiana</i> Lam.
Vadh	:	murder, killing.
Vaijayantimala, Vanamala	:	a garland of flowers worn by Vishnu.
Vairagya	:	dispassion.
Vaishnava	:	devotee of Vishnu.
Vaishnavi	:	Matrika, the female energy of Vishnu.
Vaishyas	:	agriculturist and business caste of Hindus.
Vakula, Bakula	:	a tree, <i>Mimusops elengi</i> Linn.
Valliamma	:	wife of Murugan.
Vamana	:	dwarf, an incarnation of Vishnu
Vanadevata	:	a tree spirit.
Vanadevi	:	a forest maiden.
Vapi	:	stepped well.
Varaha avatar	:	Boar incarnation of Vishnu.

Varamudra	:	hand gesture conferring a boon.
Vastraharan	:	stealing the clothes, reference to Krishna.
Vata, Vad	:	a tree, <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> Linn.
Vatapatrasayin	:	lying on a leaf of <i>Vata</i> , <i>Ficus benghalensis</i> .
Vatarangesvara	:	Lord of the <i>Vata</i> forest.
Vedika	:	railing round a sacred tree.
Velayudha	:	Skanda holding the Vel, a spear.
Veni	:	flower garland for decorating hair.
Venuvana	:	Bamboo (Venu) forest.
Vibhandika	:	father of Rishyasringa.
Vibhavasu	:	a sage cursed to become a tortoise by his brother Supratika.
Vihara	:	a building for the monks.
Vinata	:	mother of Garuda.
Vinayaka	:	Ganesha.
Vindhyunmali	:	son of Taraka.
Vishnu	:	a Hindu God who preserves all that is created.
Vishwamitra	:	a <i>rishi</i> , sent Satyavrata to heaven in his mortal body.
Vitala	:	one of the 7 worlds of Hindu mythology.
Vraj	:	countryside around Vrindavana.
Vrata	:	fast or a vow.
Vrikshaka	:	tree nymph.
Vriksha-maha	:	festival of trees.
Vrinda	:	Tulasimata, also Lakshmi.
Vyakhyana	:	discourse.
Vyakhyanamudra	:	gesture of giving a discourse.
Yajna	:	fire sacrifice.
Yajnopavita	:	sacred thread.
Yakkha	:	tree spirit.
Yaksha, yakshi	:	tree spirit.
Yama	:	Lord of death.
Yoga-maya	:	Parvati.
Yogic	:	posture of <i>Yoga</i> .
Yasoda	:	foster mother of Krishna.
Yuga	:	time span into which Hindus divide the age of the universe.

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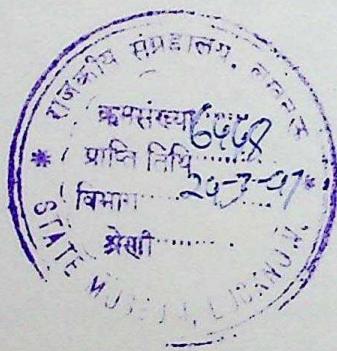
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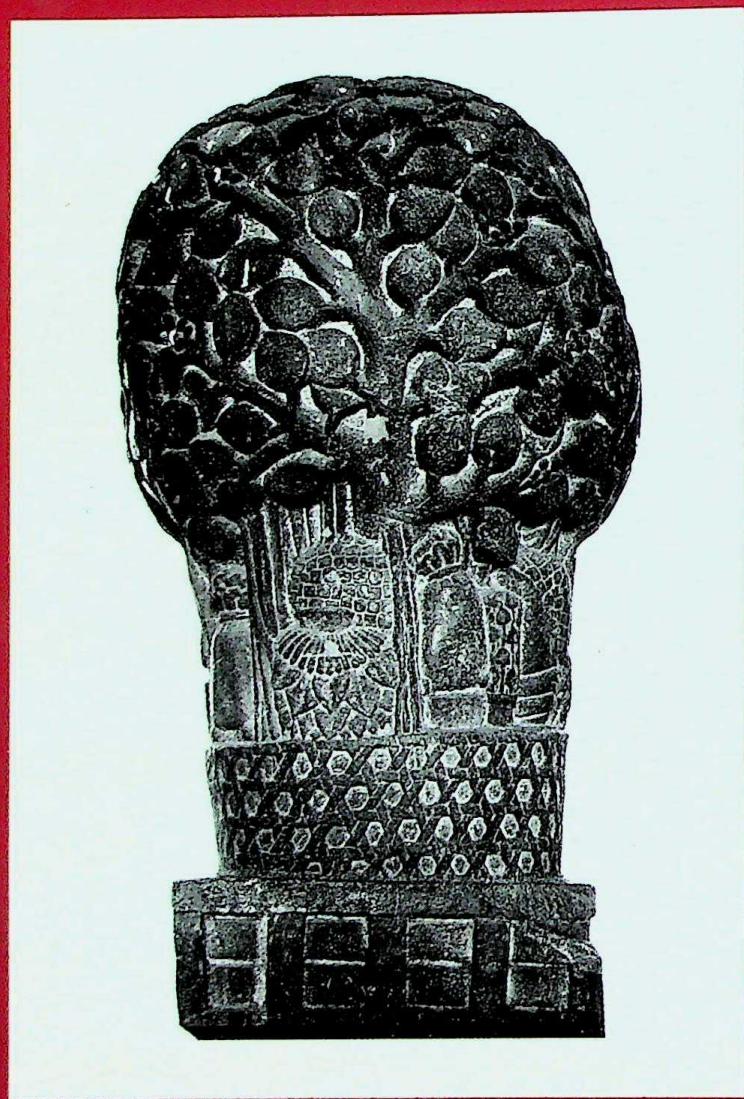
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ISBN 81-7018-883-0  
  
978817 018883 4